# An Exploration of the Impacts of Commercialisation on Student Behaviour in Higher Education

By Oliver Rees

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## Copyright Disclosure

## Abstract

This research topic explores the commercialisation of Higher Education in the United Kingdom (UK) and it investigates the impact that commercialisation has on student behaviour. The research objectives were centred on the impact commercialisation has had on student's behaviour and expectations, this included looking at the views of teachers in higher education so that this could be contrasted to the student's response.

The sample was conducted through questionnaires dispensed to business students throughout all three year groups at Huddersfield university, and was achieved during classroom in order to maximise response rate.

This research applied a mixed methodological approach; the study used a range of methods to ascertain information on universities and students. It did this by using qualitative interviews with two university lecturers, and by using quantitative questionnaires for students that were designed to find out student perspective of their experience of university and to determine if commercialisation had an impact on their behaviour.

When looking at the themes brought up by the qualitative interviews, they were very much about the changing way universities are operating and the changing ways students were behaving, with both tutors citing a strong relationship with students, having strong customer-like expectations and exhibiting consumer behaviour.

The research findings show that students at university do show signs of consumer-like behaviour to varying degrees but not uniformly, and that this can manifest differently depending on the students themselves. The findings show stronger customer-like expectations from overseas students over home students and that students in the final year of university exhibit much more consumer-like behaviour when it comes to passing or failing their own degree. However the findings also show that contrary to what the literature bears out, students do not view themselves as consumers and that as they progress through university, students seem to show less inclination towards acting like consumers.

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

## 1.1) Overview

Higher Education has experienced rapid and successive changes, primarily driven by government policy. Funding and educational aims have also been changed by government and new legislation, particularly since the 1980s. Rapid changes have occurred since the introduction of tuition fees, first in 1998 by the Labour Party, then increased in 2003 through the introduction of ‘top up fees’. Then, the fees drastically increased from 2012 under the coalition government. Consequently, there has been a fundamental shift in how education should be delivered and how the Higher Education system should operate. The student quota was abolished, allowing more students the opportunity to study in Higher Education. The tuition fee reforms have brought about a more marketised system of competition. University institutions compete for students who, in turn, provide tuition fees that are the primary source of funding. Brown (2015, p5) stated that, “under the current coalition government, the tuition fees for full-time undergraduates have been increased from £3,375 to £9,000 in the year 2012”. At the same time that tuitions were increased, the block grant given to institutions in order to meet the costs of teaching has been reduced. Since 2015 now only a small group of subjects receive direct subsidies.

The government has reduced many of the subsidies that were traditionally applied to universities and, as a result of this, competition now exists within HE. Universities have taken on the role of conventional businesses which entice students into education. Further changes will be observed with a relaxation in the regulation for institutions to award their own degrees, the introduction of new vocational degrees and the establishment of a regulatory body named The Office for Students (OfS).The Department for Business Innovation and Skills (2016) has claimed that the OfS is a consumer-focused market monitor with the power to regulate all HE providers. This shows the extent to which government policy wishes education to be treated as a business model.

Universities in England now operate similarly to business organisations in the 21st century. This is a result of legislative changes over a period of time in England; research, grant money and teaching have all been separated, a process which has increased since the 1980’s. Many external factors have also influenced university education. Technology, widening accessibility, competition internationally and drastic changes in the way education is funded have resulted in universities having far more autonomy then they have had in the past. This has resulted in a record number of Higher Education providers in the UK, as well as colleges entering the HE markets and beginning to offer Higher Education too. Universities are now funded almost entirely by tuition fees, with the UK government giving minimal amounts of grant and research money which, in turn, has given universities far more autonomy in how they choose to spend that money and how they choose to operate. The abolishment of the student quota by the government was one such action which has given universities the ability to increase revenue, if they are able to recruit the students. In the past universities had been restricted and were only able to recruit a set number of students who all received a similar level of funding paid for by the government; this kept things fairly static for universities. Recently universities can pursue new revenue streams and enrol more students. Encompassing this autonomy over how they operate, the services they provide and being able to expand on these services, for example by building new research facilities, is just a natural extension of the changes given the changing funding model. This has resulted in record competition between universities; degree-awarding powers are much more loosely regulated, meaning more private and public institutions are able to enter the HE market.

A new regulator has been introduced by the government, which is designed to give people in receipt of Higher Education additional recourse should they be dissatisfied while also providing universities with additional oversight, much like an ombudsman. Universities operate like business organisations and sell a product, in the form of degrees, to students. The government believes that a regulator is needed in order to better monitor and address issues that universities and students might face. The Department for Business Innovation and Skills (2016, p16) describes the remit of this HE regulator: “The OfS will be a consumer focused market regulator with new statutory powers and an extended remit to regulate all registered HE providers”. The regulator came into effect in April 2018 and has taken over the previous functions of HEFCE (Higher Education Funding Council for England) as well as the functions required of being a more formal regulator. The remit of this regulator is likely to grow with further changes in the future. The Department for Business Innovation and Skills also wishes students to be able to make a more informed choice before attending university, such as the earnings potential and teaching quality, which is only going to contribute to people treating education as a product.

## 1.2) Higher Education Background

The HE system in the United Kingdom has a varied and complex history. Oxford and Cambridge Universities are examples of some of the oldest and most successful British institutions that have operated since the medieval period. Cobban (1999, p4) stated that “Oxford was recognised as a fully fledged university or stadium generale only towards the close of the twelfth century”.  In the 18th century the UK saw new universities emerge and offer their services. Prior to these new institutions opening, Cambridge and Oxford had traditionally only offered students who came from affluent upper class backgrounds the ability to attend. The author, however, will be discussing the background of Higher Education from the 20th century onwards as this period is the most relevant and critically important, having overseen vast changes in Higher Education.

Universities in the UK were traditionally self-governing and independent organisations that remained largely self-reliant financially.  However, this changed after the First World War. Universities started to experience financial difficulty, having suffered from external forces as part of the war. In response to this, the government created the University Grants Committee. This new committee oversaw financial grants to universities, both to current and new establishments that were created, which helped to resolve the financial issues universities faced at that current period. Admission was largely exclusive to those in the upper echelons of society; those who could afford such education at this time came from the upper class, were financially wealthy and had experienced an education not available to the everyday man, which kept university education out of attainment for the working class.

After the Second World War, in 1945, there was a huge demand for university education from an expanding population. America, post war, had a huge influence on UK universities. The United States put together a package in order to export technologies and expertise and deliver a large financial aid package so that the UK could overcome its war-ravaged state. Smith et al (2002, p446) claimed that the use of technology from the United States would help to recover the desperate cycle of low productivity from the western economies. Moreover, they state that “Universities in both nations were implicated in various elements of these programs. The most obvious connection was through the role of higher education in developing the theory and practice of US management models”

## 1.3) Education Act of 1962

Driven by a growing population and a rapidly changing economy with new industrial technological innovations driving the UK, in 1962 the government enacted the Education Act of 1962. This new Act unified the funding options for students wishing to embark on studying their first degree; prior to this many local authorities offered tuition fee loans and grant packages on a discretionary basis. This new Act widely increased pupil participation within Higher Education and grants were widely accessible on a means-tested basis for all who met the eligibility criteria.

## 1.4) Thatcher Reforms (1970 -1990)

In 1970 the Conservative government, with Margaret Thatcher as Education Secretary and then later as Prime Minister, proceeded to change the Higher Education system in a profound way through educational reforms. These reforms were to make the universities more consumer and market-focused for what was, at the time, still a university system that was mostly insulated from society and remained in the confines of the upper and middle classes. Despite this there was increasing participation from people from working class backgrounds because the general level of education was improving.

In 1981 universities were forced to implement cuts of 18 percent to their budgets and fees were introduced for the first time for international students. The Telegraph (2013, p1) stated that around 3,000 academic positions were eliminated and student grants were frozen in the year 1984. Furthermore, small changes were made within universities, for example, the staff were treated similarly to salaried staff and increased accountability was introduced for research funding, as the government was unclear how research grants were being spent. Moreover, the University Grants Committee insulated the academics from answerability. Pierson (1998, p135) argued that “ownership should be given to the State or their more direct clients”. With regard to universities themselves, he reported that universities were seen to be contemptuous of the needs of commerce and industry, adding that many students who had knowledge in the department of arts and humanities, did not acquire the transferable skills into the world of commercial employment.

The Grants Committee was abolished and a new funding organisation called the Funding Council was created, which enabled the government to have more control and, consequently, academics had less influence. This new funding council ensured that research grants were more strictly awarded. This had a significant impact on the way universities received long term funding and the performance of universities as a key measure in how much money they were allocated. Gilroy, et al (2009) reported that before 1986 every university in the UK received a research grant from the University Grants Committee irrespective of the volume or quality of research.

## 1.5) The Further and Higher Education Act 1992

In 1992 there was a drastic change in the way universities were operated. Many polytechnics were undergoing conversion into universities and these new universities were funded primarily by teaching, unlike their counterpart universities that were funded by research and teaching. League tables were also introduced. Gilroy et al (2009) commented that the educational press used RAE (Research Assessment Exercise) data to produce league tables where the statistics were unsound. These league tables were exposed in the public domain and, as a result of this, contributed to an additional pressure that universities had to adjust.

## 1.6) New Labour 1997

In 1997 a new government formed by New Labour, which was led by Tony Blair, was elected.  The university system at this time was under pressure, faced with cost constraints imposed by the previous government while at the same time having to accommodate a substantial increase in student numbers. Additionally, between 1989 and 1997 funding given per student had fallen by 36% despite the student population doubling. Universities within the UK were also facing increasing competitive challenge from global institutions .The first tuition fees were introduced in 1998; the new students were asked to pay £1000 annually based upon their parental income, however, a year later the grant system changed (Lunt, 2008). Wilkins et al (2012) commented that in 1999 maintenance grants were destroyed and replaced with maintenance loans. This was to give universities additional revenue in order to better adapt in the changing educational landscape. In 1999 Tony Blair discussed that his ambition was for 50% of 18-30 year olds to access Higher Education. Foundation degrees were introduced in order to help achieve this target. Foundation degrees had lower entry requirements and were designed to allow people who had performed at a lesser level academically or who came from a non-academic background to access the university system.

Having already introduced tuition fees, further policy ideas were researched. Education was a big priority and this was stated publically by New Labour. A new strategy was developed through a government white paper and through the Dearing Report (1997). The findings aimed to put universities in the UK on an ‘even footing’ with globally leading universities. This was to further connect universities with business organisations and seek alternative forms of funding where appropriate. It was recommended that students should bear some of the cost of university education and that this should be repaid based on income after graduation, along with the re-introduction of means-tested grants. Lunt (2008, p743) stated that “The Dearing Committee recommended that individual students (who were the beneficiaries of university education) should meet part of the costs of full-time higher education, when they could afford to, through income contingent repayment of loans after graduation”.

## 1.7) Higher Education Act 2004

The Higher Education Act of 2004 was a package of measures put in place by the Labour government with the goal of reversing the decline of per-pupil funding through the Higher Education system Dearden et al (2008). The changes included the re-introduction of means-tested grants for students and an increase in the tuition fees up to £3,000 from September 2006. The lowest income students were eligible for bursaries of £300. Fee repayment was deferrable and students were only required to make repayments of 9% on incomes above £15,000 annually. Additionally, students were not required to pay interest on these loans with interest rates set at zero percent and all remaining student debt set to be written off after a 25 year period. The intention of this new system was to increase funding into Higher Education and to increase student participation into Higher Education by removing barriers of entry, particularly for those on lower incomes. In analysing the impact of these reforms Dearden et al (2008, p3) stated that “individuals from the lowest part of the parental income distribution will typically find a substantial net reduction over their lifetime in the cost of their HE due to the grants and bursaries. On the other hand individuals from the middle to high parts of the parental income distribution will typically end up seeing the cost of their HE increase.”

In 2009 another review looking into Higher Education funding was conducted. This review was entitled the Browne Review and its findings were published in 2009. Wilkins et al (2012) suggest that the report recommended that the burden of funding HE should be placed on the graduates. To add, there should be no cap placed on tuition fees that universities can charge to their students The Browne Review also found that tuition fees for students, which at the time were £3,225, had risen with inflation and had not impacted on people who wanted to achieve a higher education.

## 1.8) Coalition Reforms 2012

A coalition government, formed in 2010 by the Liberal Democrats and the Conservative Party, implemented wide-ranging reforms in 2012 to the Higher Education system. These reforms reduced the amount the government paid in subsidies to universities and increased the tuition fees payable by students, bringing the maximum tuition fees payable capped at £9,000. These new reforms were designed to reduce the government expenditure to universities, while still maintaining the funding; the reforms were also designed to create a more competitive environment for universities with a more marketised education system in place where universities would compete for students and act, in essence, as business organisations would rather than as public bodies.

Hillman (2016) discussed these reforms and stated that the coalition government's new reforms in the years of 2010-2015 would reduce public spending on Higher Education teaching by around three billion pounds a year. Additionally, tuition fee income was set to rise from 2.6 billion to 8.1 billion pounds. As a result of this trebling of tuition fees a new system of repayments was put into place. This new system ensured that students were making repayments towards loans when achieving a £21,000 annual income threshold. The previous repayment schemes were handled directly by HMRC from payroll and students were required to pay nine percent of any income above that £21,000 threshold. Interest rates were also re-worked and have been based upon the RPI rate of inflation (retail price index). Students have a staggered interest rate with the RPI based upon what they are earning, starting with just the RPI for those earning below £25.000 and rising to RPI + three percent for those earning above £45,000, with a stagger rate of 0.5% for those in the middle.

Student grants were abolished during these reforms and maintenance loans were increased in order to supplement the shortfall created by the removal of the grant system. Chowdry et al (2012, p215) covered these changes: "Students from the poorest families (with household income below £25,000) will receive between £670 and £880 more in up-front support from the government under the new system than under the current system". This resulted in a large increases in the generosity of maintenance grants and loans. The government believed it would save money by cutting maintenance grants back for those from higher-income families, the maximum parental income at which a grant is payable was been reduced from £50,695 to £42,600.

## 1.9) Post-2015 Reforms

Under George Osborne as Chancellor in the 2015 Conservative majority government, the government decided to freeze the repayment threshold at £21,000 under the coalition reforms. The threshold was due to rise in line with inflation, also all maintenance grants were replaced, including NHS (National Health Service) bursaries and grants for students studying eligible NHS degrees such as Nursing. NHS student places were relaxed alongside this change with the government citing the fact that more places could be funded because of the removal of grants.

In 2017 the government called a general election in which it was re-elected but with a reduced number of seats; as a result they formed a minority government. During this election, led by a new Prime Minister, Theresa May, one of the prevailing political topics was the way in which universities are funded. Labour put forward proposals for free university education paid for directly by the Treasury and the abolishment of student loans. The post-election government made further changes to Higher Education, likely because of the political pressure. The student repayment threshold was raised to £25,000 and tuition fees were frozen because, while the top amount of £9,000 was the maximum allowable charge per year for a university course, universities had been allowed to make minor increases in line with inflation before the freeze.

In 2018 a new regulator, the Office for Students, was introduced in order to oversee universities. The government believed this new regulator would benefit students, ensuring that they were treated fairly, for example, receiving value for money and providing further oversight over universities, ensuring competition was working effectively and that students had a redress option should they be dissatisfied. This new regulatory body replaced the past HE Funding Council and has more powers over universities, such as being able to give degree-awarding powers to new institutions and promote the interests of employers and students. The Department for Education stated that "The Office for Students will have a duty to promote student interests; ensuring students have a wide range of quality options". The government has committed to conduct a review into HE and tuition fees, citing the fact that they believe students are not necessarily receiving the best value for money, but this is still ongoing and has not been released.


Figure 1: Student Enrolment Figures (Hale & Evans, 2019)

## 1.10) Summary

Commercialisation has many effects on organisations and by understanding how this process has taken place, and how this has changed things for students and universities, a better understanding of commercialisation and its effects on education will be gained. Looking specifically at education will be the aim, although consideration of examples from other industries may also be informative.

Commercialisation in education will be looked at broadly in the literature review to any areas which are important, such as literature related to students and consumers. Looking at consumer behaviour models may also beneficial. Education has become much more attainable globally and the world has become more interconnected as a result of new digital technologies and globalisation so these may also be areas to look into when reviewing the Higher Education system in the UK. In relation to the international landscape of Higher Education, Martin Haigh (2008, pp27-440) stated "internationalisation is about income generation for cash-strapped higher education institutes." Martin highlighted international students and their effects on the Higher Education system of western countries, particularly considering they come from wealthy countries and pay greater fees.

When examining the changing education system, the near future changes that have started to impact on Higher Education will be considered. A new regulatory body, The Office for Students, has recently been formed to carry new powers such as the ability to give private institutions degree validation so that these organisations may award their own degrees. Many colleges have already started to expand in Higher Education by offering degrees that are taught through their own campus but validated by a university. Riep (2017, p5) looks at how commercialisation often brings contradictions into education and how these can be resolved: “Governments purchase mass-produced and standardised examinations from corporations such as Pearson that shape the design and meaning of education, yet the focus on data-based scores and results produced by commodities for testing can often be at odds with notions of ‘quality’ in learning.” This is important because often universities can be placed in a difficult position between what the government expects in outcomes and what the market and commercialisation will allow.

## 1.11) General Research Aims

The main aim will be to research the impact that commercialisation has had on students. Students, it could be argued are now consumers and with this, expectations have also changed; this has altered the relationship between students and universities and the author will be looking at how students view universities as consumers, what students’ expectations are, now that students are in effect customers and purchasers of education.

As part of this overriding aim there are three sub themes that aim to generate improved understanding of student as consumers and fulfil some gaps we perceive as existing in current knowledge.

1. To gain a better understanding of the specific differences between different groups of students in terms of how they both rationalise and choose University.
2. To explore how the student journey impacts on their behaviour as customers/consumers.
3. To explore academics perception of the rise in student consumerism

# Chapter 2: Literature Review

## 2.1) Funding In Higher Education

When universities were funded exclusively by the government, places remained exclusive; because England now operates a tuition fee policy, university funding has increased substantially in the last few years, driven by increasing student numbers that have access to universal funding, the form of student loans and from a growing population which is in turn providing record levels of funding to universities who are able to attract the student numbers. McGettigan (2014) writes about how tuition fees are an attractive model for governments to pursue because they fulfil the same function as direct funding but, because it is loaned, they expect to receive some of this money back, making the Treasury balance sheets look good. In Scotland, where the devolved government has chosen to fund places for university students and does not operate a tuition fee policy, university places are still limited and this results in many potential students being turned away from Higher Education and makes it inaccessible for many people. Student places remain competitive and universities are able to choose who attains these places. This is in stark contrast to the university system in England where universities compete for students instead of students competing for university places. The Office for National Statistics (2011) shows that graduates, on average, have earned £12,000 more over the last decade than non graduates. Bolton's (2017) Tuition Fee Statistics illustrates the point that while the numbers of students able to obtain acceptance into universities has increased, the UK also charges one of the highest amounts of tuition fees of any OECD country. When it comes to students' views on how university education is funded, students Neves & Hillman (2016), looking at the statistics gathered by the 2016 experience survey, say that "just 37% of respondents feeling they receive good value for money compared to 53% in 2012". 2012 is when the new system of tuition fees was introduced.

## 2.2) Students as Fee Payers

Tuition fees remained a hot political topic in politics and have been a very prominent topic in societal culture ever since tuition fees were introduced and then increased. The system of tuition fees has been in a state of constant flux, having being tinkered with by every government. The average debt for students attending university for a three year duration averages around forty five to fifty thousand pounds; this includes maintenance loans which the majority of students take. Clark et al (2017, p710) say that estimates from 1994 show the average student accumulated £686 worth of student debt.  Pennell and West (2005) looked at some of the research conducted by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) between 2002 and 2003 which showed that students graduating in that period were accruing an average debt of £8,666 and that this was a 150 percent above inflation increase when compared to the average student graduating between 1998 and 1999, when the average debt accrued was £3,465. With these recent increases only the US currently has higher on average tuition fees and student related debts accrued by students than the UK.

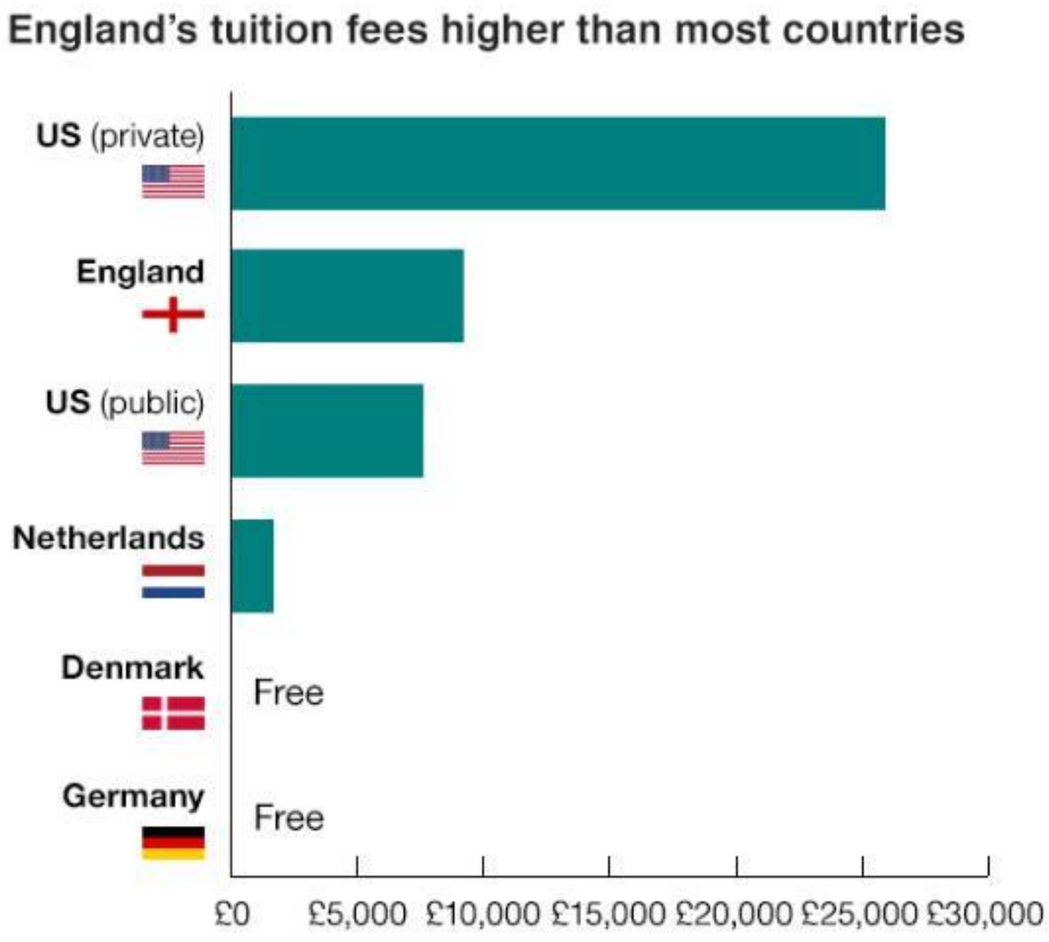



Figure 2: England's rise in tuition fees (Coughlan, 2017)

As tuition fees have increased, so too has the method of repayment undergone successive changes. Repayment thresholds have also increased; these are the point at which students begin repaying their student loans when they begin to earn above a certain income. For students who attended prior to 2012, the threshold sits at £18,333 and this rises in line with inflation each year. For all students post 2012 and onwards, the current threshold now sits at 9% above £25,000. Johnston (2013, pp201-205) hits upon the issue of repayments by highlighting the fact that while politicians argue that this is a progressive repayment system aimed at those who benefit the most from Higher Education, it is not the case that those earning the most are the ones paying the most back into the system. They go on to highlight an example of this: "a graduate having borrowed £27,000 to cover the fees for a three-year degree commencing in 2012 with a starting salary of £21,000 will pay back a total of £67,783 over a period of 23 years and four months". Though it is worth noting that the threshold is significantly higher now than for those students who attended in 2012, the principle remains that some students who are middle-income earners could end up vastly overpaying on the initial tuition loans and because of the interest rates associated with those loans, some students could end up making repayments in perpetuity until the loan repayment period ends, which is currently 35 years. The interest rate applied to tuition fee loans taken out by students who begin study now is 6.3% and this is applied during the duration of the course, which for most students will be 3 years. Lewis (2019) argues that this interest rate is higher than a lot of mortgages and a significant increase over students who attended university before 2012 when the new system took effect.

Esson & Hubert (2014) do suggest that, on average, graduates tend to earn more over their working lifetime, to the tune of £100,000, when compared to people who only attain A levels and so this needs to be taken into account when looking at what students repay if, in the absence of the Higher Education they received, they were then not able to earn as much money. High income earners or those who come from wealthy backgrounds may earn substantially more, which would mean less money repaid through interest or they may have the means to pay for tuition loans outright. However, while this may mean the current system seems to favour those who can pay outright, it is worth noting that the repayment system and tuition fees, when compared to people who attended university from wealthy backgrounds before the introduction of the fees, do at least pay into the system.

## 2.3) Perception Towards Student Debt

In recent years a large topic in education has been around the debt aspect of Higher Education. The government has sought to teach students about the student repayment system so as not to put off students by the idea of accruing large debts, while groups opposed to student loans, such as the Labour Party, led by Jeremy Corbyn, campaigned for the abolishment of student debt. How students perceive these debts will have had a large impact, especially since 2012 when tuition fees were trebled. Students could thus be categorised by their attitudes towards student loans. These attitudes towards debt will be informed by many external factors: the person's upbringing, education, experience and outside influences, to name a few. Categories of students could be roughly placed into 3 sections: debt positive, debt resigned and debt anxious.

Harrison et al (2013) highlight the case of the debt positive students. These students believe that their student loans are worthwhile and sound financial investments. Debt positive students see the potential long-term benefits as well worth the cost, such as higher employability levels and better earning potential. Naturally debt positive students are more receptive to the commercial nature of Higher Education, seeing this as the purchase of a product for a cost which will benefit them in the long term.

Pennell & West (2005) point to a study that concludes that students who were less debt adverse and were less conscientious in accruing debt were 1.25 times more likely to go into Higher Education; the study also found that those who were the most against taking on student debt tended to come from groups which are specifically targeted for wider participation into Higher Education, made up of people from the lowest social economic areas and people from under-represented ethnic backgrounds, such as Asians from the Pakistani community.

Debt resigned students have a more relaxed attitude towards student debt; this group does not like student debt and loans but sees these as necessary in achieving Higher Education. These students see student loans as something they may or may not have to deal with in the future. Debt anxious students see student debt as a large psychological barrier irrespective of whether they will personally repay much or all of the student loans in the long term. Debt anxious students see the huge debts they have accrued as a constant worry. Harrison et al (2013, pp94 –p98) highlight the case of the debt positive students and suggest that women disproportionately make up students who have anxiety over student debt.

## 2.4) Students as Customers

The word 'student' is increasingly becoming interchangeable with the word 'consumer' or 'customer' in Higher Education; this is because of a wide variety of factors: the way in which universities operate now, the way in which students are treated, the narrative that is pushed by the government and media.  Nixon et al (2016, p79) state "The student consumer stands as a powerful icon in the debates, not only in news media, but also in government policy and senior management discourse". The effects of this are easy to see. Universities face fierce competition, engage in large promotional campaigns, spend large amount of money on new buildings and facilities. This is done in order for universities to make their institutions an attractive place for students to study and because students are the ones who choose where to study, they do arguably have consumer influence over universities. They go on to state that given the move to marketisation inevitably HEI's will need to consider their response in terms of quality provision.

As universities become more economically incentivised by students, the relationship between the student and university changes and has the likely outcome of feeding into a further consumer/product relationship. Saunders (2014, p7) states "With regard to higher education, the social relationship between the student and her institution becomes embedded in the economic relationship between the two. As such, it becomes common-sense for faculty, practitioners, and scholars to refer to students, and understand them, as customers This is then likely to result in students acting more as consumers, though little research seems to exist on the extent to which students do actually view themselves as consumers. Different students from different backgrounds and areas are likely to have different perceptions of the student/consumer relationship, Woodalla et al (2012, p63), when conducting a study on students as consumers and customer value, found in their concluding statement that local and international students had differing value systems and interpreted the value of education in different ways: "We found that home and international students construe value in distinctly different ways; for home students Net Value was primarily a trade off between price and attributes, whilst for international students a balance of results for the customer (outcomes) and acquisition/relationship costs was of more relevance".

## 2.5) Consumer Behaviour

Woodall et al (2014, p48): say "students are increasingly demonstrating customer-like behaviour and are now demanding even more value from institutions" Students therefore expect a certain level of service because of this consumer-centric relationship that commercialisation has brought. Universities are expected to offer more services in order to accommodate this changing behaviour and students are placing more demands on universities and tutors because the level of expectation has changed. Gillespie et al (2010) in their research on students as customers found that students would be more likely to start feeling entitled because they are now paying fees directly.

One such attitude that has changed in academia is the way in which grades are awarded. It has long since been a cornerstone that students who put in the work, time and effort are likely to receive higher grades. However, when students do not receive the grades they are expecting they are often blaming the universities themselves; because of the financial cost of attaining a university education many students are under the belief that this entitles them to a certain outcome. This may be in the form of good grades or services but the underpinning belief is that the financial cost guarantees a certain outcome; education in this way is not experienced but purchased. On the Dearing Report and the increasing commercial nature of education, Wilson and Williams (2012, p52) state that "When HE becomes so explicitly linked to employment, it is perhaps to be expected that Dearing should suggest that government and universities must 'encourage the student to see him/herself as an investor in receipt of a service, and to seek, as an investor, value for money and a good return from the investment". This change in student behaviour is only exemplified by the wider UK society. They go on to suggest that "Many in government often refer to students as fee payers" and that "It is easy to get from media and politicians, that today's students are very different". From an ideological point of view it could be argued the government themselves have continually pushed students into behaving like consumers with the ideological underpinnings that this pushes competition and thus increases the quality of education, while removing the burden of funding this education from the State.

People studying are much more interested in achieving qualifications and the outcome of university education rather than the learning process itself; students are becoming disengaged from traditional classroom learning and are instead furthering their study at home, rather than interacting at the university itself. One such area where students are demanding universities accommodate them is in the way timetables and lesson blocks are scheduled; students want a schedule that fits around their own personal lives, work and responsibilities and, as consumers, are being more vocal than before about it . Money et al (2017, p10) conducted a study on this topic and found that “The issues of how the programme timetable was structured were debated and no common consensus was found, although the majority thought that a blocked timetable allowed them the flexibility to build in their other commitments”. The rationale for the timetabling of face-to-face activities is varied and there is much debate on the perceived “value for money”. Many smaller institutions and colleges are already offering degrees with contact time spanning across a day or two rather than lesson blocks all over the week; this timetable is more convenient to working professionals and in doing so they offer a competitive advantage over rival universities.

## 2.6) Consumer Socialisation Theory

As part of this literature review the author will be looking at consumer behaviour theories in order to see how and where they apply to students who partake in the Higher Education system; this is important in order to understand how students as consumers may act and what may influence them. In the following review of the literature consumer theory is introduced in order to establish the nature of the relationship between sellers and buyers. This helps pinpoint the nature of the relationship between students and the universities and to attempt to locate this relationship within the context of existing customer behaviour theory.

The consumer socialisation theory is a theory which explains how consumers acquire knowledge, attitudes and tastes and how they develop purchasing behaviour throughout their lifetime. Consumer behaviour they develop will include their preferred brands and tastes, how they make purchase decisions and how the decision-making process is impacted upon by socialisation. Parents have a large impact on the socialisation of children and this can also transfer consumer habits and tastes onto their children too. Mishra et al (2018, p2) describe this socialisation: “During the teenage phase, children mostly interact with socialization agents (e.g. parents, peers and media). These immediate environmental factors significantly influence the consumer skills and decision-making process of teenagers”. The food parents purchase and the meals they make will influence what kinds of food products the children will enjoy. Children will often imitate their parents and so a parent’s preferred food or bias against a food product can also transfer onto children.

The educational environment of children and adults can also socialise people into certain behaviours. Schools which teach about climate change and teach about this topic often may impart onto the student a better awareness about climate change, which may then impact upon their consumer decision-making, like purchasing a more ethically friendly food brand which markets itself as environmentally friendly, for example.

People’s biological sex can also play a large part in the socialisation process. Both sexes often have differing priorities and different behaviours. Men and woman may be part of differing social structures. Having different socialisation processes means men and woman will exhibit different consumer behaviour. Advertisers will use this and can often exploit the biological differences in order to market products at the target sex.

Advertising itself can be part of the socialisation process, especially for children and young adults who will be more susceptible to marketing messages. Often children’s adverts are repeated with catchy musical tunes, colourful cartoons and messages that can be instilled into young consumers and this may then affect their purchasing habits at a later time. Many colleges have partnerships with universities; these partnerships allow the universities to set up information sessions and fairs on college grounds so that students may be enticed into that particular university once finished at college. This itself is a socialisation process because it can influence the decision-making process.

## 2.7) The Five Stage Model

The five stage model is a model which lays out the consumer decision-making process. The first step involves the consumer recognising a problem or a trigger for a necessary purchase. A washing machine breaking down, for example, would mean the consumer recognises that they may need to purchase a new washing machine.  This also applies to students wishing to study for a degree; if a decision has been made to study then that reason will have had a trigger. A common theme for students is the desire to gain a qualification, which will help them advance in a career or enable them to be more employable; in that instance the problem identified would have been the lack of such qualifications which may be holding them back. Some people may believe they need the skills which only a university could teach, or may feel isolated in their current job and see university as a means of making connections and gaining valuable experience; these things can all be recognition of a problem.

Having identified the problem, the consumer will then search for information in a bid to resolve the problem; people searching online for potential products and looking up reviews, for example. For students this information search will involve looking at courses and institutions; finding the right course and the right university may take quite a lot of information searching.  People can make use of all kinds of information in order to better help them make an informed decision; family and friends may offer recommendations and the internet offers many people the ability to do a large amount of research. Universities are aware of employability issues and will seek to offer prospective students the skills that employers are looking for Huang &Turner, (2018). This will be appealing to prospective students who come across this in the information search and who identified this in the problem-recognition stage

Having done the information search the next step involves the consumer evaluating the alternatives. This may mean looking at alternative products, with alternative features; students who have narrowed down a potential degree may be looking at the merits of individual universities in order to determine where best to study. Subjective issues may play a part in this process, such as an ideal university not being considered because of having no transport to get there. Reay, et al (2010) reported that parents of working class children wish for their children to attend university but worry about the university location being too far away from the family; therefore students who do not wish to be away from family may seek an alternative university which is closer to home, if this is a priority for them when seeking alternatives.

Once the consumer has evaluated all the alternatives and done the necessary research, a purchasing decision is ready to be made. Customers can still be dissuaded at this point, if a negative review is found of a product or a recommendation from somebody trusted, but the purchase is ready to be made. For students this would involve enrolling into the university of choice.

Post-purchase behaviour dictates how the consumer feels about the purchase; if a shoddy product has been used then it is likely that a refund may be sought or a bad review left, if a good experience is had then the consumer will feel happy with the purchase decision and will elevate that particular product or experience. This is how repeat customers can often be won, since a happy consumer will likely go through the same decision process when the same product or service is needed.

## 2.8) Heuristics

Heuristics are mental processes which influence how somebody makes and reaches a decision. They are often used by consumers when involved in the decision-making process, in order to make those decisions.

## 2.9) The Anchor Heuristic

The anchor heuristic is a cognitive bias which works by the consumer using the first piece of information available to them in order to reach a decision. Using the first piece of information in order to make a decision is not necessarily the best thing to do and can lead to snap judgments and the wrong decisions being made; even when new information is available consumers are likely to use the first piece they find. Tversky and Kahneman (1974), on the anchor heuristic, say "people make estimates by starting from a initial value that is adjusted to yield a final answer and adjustments are typically insufficient". A good review from a member of family may colour the decision-making process, or a special offer on a laptop may become the anchor for deciding whether to purchase that item.

## 2.10) The Affect Heuristic

This heuristic uses emotion in order to reach a decision; emotions such as fear, sadness, joy can be big motivators in the decision-making process. It is a subconscious decision-making process and usually means decisions are made quicker or shorter depending on the emotion and how long the feeling lasts. A consumer may spend money they have not budgeted for if the purchase itself brings self-gratification and makes the person happy. Equally, somebody may decide to turn down extra work, even when offered a higher amount, because of the feeling that doing this extra work brings.

## 2.11) The Availability Heuristic

When people are making decisions this heuristic method has the person recalling the first important piece of information in relation to the decision, using the most easily and most available piece of information. When people make decisions they recall the most available piece of data in relation to that decision. For example, people choosing what they would like to eat will often go for the first thing which comes into their mind; the reason why that particular piece of food might come to mind could be that they had just seen an advertisement about that specific food.

## 2.12) Psychoanalytic Theory

Psychoanalytical theory looks at how and why people behave the way they do. People are complex and their actions cannot be judged on purely external factors or rationality. This theory was developed by Sigmund Freud. Freud stated that people have underlying desires and instincts; people, he believed, make decisions not just consciously but subconsciously as well and that this subconscious has a large part to play in the way people behave and the decisions they make. Sigmund Freud (1991, p40) said "unconsciousness seemed to us at first only an enigmatical characteristic of a definitive mental act, now it means more to us". Freud also developed the idea that people do not even understand their own motivations but that if you could tap into these latent desires and needs, they could be harnessed in order to persuade people into purchasing things. This was harnessed to great effect in 1950's America, where advertisers started marketing cigarettes to woman by portraying woman who smoked as strong and powerful, this appealed greatly to woman who were fighting for equality, since smoking at this time was seen a mans hobby.

## 2.13) Social Exchange Theory

These new behaviours are consistent with the social exchange theory. Social exchange theory is about people, groups, organisations etc exchanging things of value to the other party which lead to social or economic value. Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005, pp875-878) believes that "social exchange theory (SET) is among the most influential conceptual paradigms for understanding workplace behaviour." Before HE was so widely accessible it could be argued that there may have been a social exchange, in that students attended academia for the altruistic goal of education itself and research, however, as discussed earlier, education is very much centred on the economic benefits it may bring to the individual and the cost associated with that. In this case students may view tuition fees as an exchange in return for the qualification; if students feel they are exchanging something then they expect something back equal in value, though that value may vary according to each individual.

The social exchange theory is a theory based on the belief that relationships between groups, organisations and individuals are based upon exchange and that the exchange may be indirect or direct and could encompasses a variety of things; the exchange is not necessarily limited to a product or service and many social exchanges happen without an economic factor. Matiaske (2013) highlights that exchanges can consist of negative items as well as positive, such as bribes or threats and punishments. The threat of a speeding fine, for example, may influence a driver's relationship with a driving agency. When a system is established between parties, an exchange is negotiated between both parties, generally for each other's mutual benefit. With humans being social in nature, it is postulated that mutual advancement happens by utilising different people's skills so that everybody's lives may improve. This system, though simplified, arguably provides the basis for today's economic model. In times before capitalism really took off, a barter system was often used for a more direct exchange. Money then replaced this direct system so that goods and services were exchanged for a currency or implied value and this could then be later redeemed against something that was needed, providing flexibility to the exchange system. When exchanges happen, often these are governed with rules and responsibility to ensure that people in society are not mistreated, due to different organisations and groups having more leverage or power over other organisations. Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005) state that when exchanges happen rules need to be negotiated in order to govern these exchanges and that this applies primarily to economic exchanges.

If one of the parties in the exchange is not happy, then that party may want to sever the exchange or alter the exchange if circumstances dictate that the exchange is no longer favourable. This is why rules negotiated by both parties are important, so that these changes can be fairly carried out. Exchanges that are not economic tend to be much more flexible and personal, and may not involve any economic means at all but could cover other exchanges, such as people's time and friendship.

Organisations that do not provide consumers with benefits or perceived benefits can often find themselves in trouble, not just economically but in trouble with their own stakeholders, who they are also often entwined in an economic relationship with. These consumers will seek an alternative partner with which to bargain an exchange, which will come to the detriment of the original organisation. Consumers may feel failed by reasons other than monetary value; they may not feel they received a service or product as advertised or their interactions may have been negative in nature. In a world where many transactions are digital in nature the organisation's own values may not align with the consumer, for example in sustainability, and so the economic value may be provided but consumer may still sever ties in order to fulfil their own self interests. Providing consumers with a positive experience, then, is very important, as well as maintaining a responsible approach with consumers, such as building long-term relationships. Customers who are invested in an exchange such as a product or service are much more likely to stay with that organisation. Knippenberg and Sleebos (2006) states that if an organisation is perceived to value its employees and treat its employees well, then social exchange theory purports that employees will in turn work harder and support the organisation.

Perception is important; consumers will often evaluate and look at alternatives before entering into an exchange in order to make sure they are maximising their own value and making the right decision; often this is where marketing comes into play, by marketing the advantages and values of their own organisation to consumers.

## 2.14) University Expectations

Modern students are conditioned by the Higher Education system; when changes are made to the way universities operate this has the effect of trickling down onto the students. The move to a system of fees, where students take out loans in order to pay for their education, was always going to change the way students perceive Higher Education. Jones (2010, p44) on this states that “One of the main effects has been the frequently cited notion of the student as a fee-paying customer, seeking greater value for money not only for their fees but also for their overall student experience”. Another large change was the removal of the cap on student numbers and, as covered above, the many changes towards a marketised system where universities are now competing against each other. All these things have an impact on students and what they expect from universities.

The way universities teach course content can alter students’ expectations; universities which involve students and where students know what is expected of them enable students to take personal ownership of their learning, acknowledging that the more work they personally do the better work they will produce, whereas students who are given little guidance and where the universities offer a bland learning routine are less likely to be engaged and expect to do less work; the way universities treat students can also change the type of learning styles students are likely to use. Buckley et al (2004, p141): stated “We propose that expectations influence the type of orientation adopted by the student in the specific course situation. If the students have the expectation that they have to actively engage in the learning process, they will be more likely to adopt a learning/mastery orientation. If the students have the expectation that they will simply be asked to perform in exams and will not be involved in the course in any other meaningful manner, they will be more likely to adopt a learning orientation”.

Students’ expectations are often formed before attending universities. With education being a particularly prevalent topic in the UK, much of the language used by the media, politicians and other influential figures is likely to affect a student’s world view. Chonko et al (2010, p272) on this matter, says: “As is the case with most services, expectations play a key role in the evaluation of service. On entering college, students’ expectations, most likely, are based on their high school experience and what they may have been able to derive via word-of-mouth from orientation sessions conducted on the college campus, students whom they meet, family who may have attended the college, and others”. When politicians refer to those attending universities as fee payers, prospective students are likely to pick up on this and become accustomed to the idea that they will need to pay for their university education and this is then likely to give them a customer-centric mindset; when paying for a service an expectation is formed about what you are paying for and what you expect to receive in return.

When students first enter Higher Education many students are likely to have unrealistic expectations of what will be expected of them and it is within this first year that expectations are likely to be formulated for the duration of the course. Chonko et al (2010, p273) looks at some of the past literature on this area: “Krallman and Holcomb (1997) examined the expectations of 1st-year students and concluded that many had unrealistic expectations about their college experiences, particularly with respect to grades, course content, and work difficulty” and then say “In summary, little is known about the expectations of incoming students regarding education”.

With universities usually being at the forefront of technology and more people nationally and internationally seeking HE education, many institutions now seek to provide education that can be digested and taught within the comfort of the learner’s home. This makes it convenient for people with personal commitments, working professionals or just those who seek a non- conventional way of attaining qualifications. Distance learning has really taken off within the wider educational environment of the UK but especially within universities, such as with the use of Blackboard. Those students who are in full time attendance will still use online virtual learning environments; these allow students to upload work, download work materials, catch up on missed lectures and generally host a wide range of resources. Cacciamani et al (2018, p1) state that “Students often choose online courses because the classes are flexible in terms of the time students can access the course, and because the learning materials are easily accessible from their preferred locations”. Many of today’s modern students are well versed in online technology and consume much of their entertainment, news and podcasts online and education seems like a natural next step.

## 2.15) Grade Expectations

In the UK good degree results are at an all-time high, with many students achieving 2.1 and first class classifications. The reasons for this may be many; more students than ever are attending universities which results in more people achieving degrees. In the current competitive environment of Higher Education many universities are going further in helping students so that good results will then reflect well on the university itself. Technology has enabled people the flexibility and knowledge to better meet academic demands. Bachan (2015, p1580) believes that this increase is due to grade inflation and states “This increase, particularly since the early 1990s, may suggest a fall in educational standards or ‘grade inflation’ which can be taken to mean the award of a ‘good’ degree classification over an extended period of time without a corresponding increase in student achievement or ability”.

Because of the transactional nature of Higher Education and the changes mentioned above, students do have grade expectations and these expectations are influenced by a wide variety of factors. The student’s own outlook, for example, will influence what the student expects to achieve grade-wise. Andrews, Swanson and Kugler (2007, p4): states that “Students who are overly optimistic with regards to their grade expectations and set their goals too high may become discouraged and put forth less effort in a class. In this case, over-optimism may result in a relatively worse course grade”. Students who overestimate and underachieve are therefore at a higher risk of apathy and dropping out than those who have lower expectations. With many people achieving high scoring degrees, this can also put pressure on those studying to also achieve high scoring degrees in order to remain competitive.

The way in which grades are awarded affects the expectations of students; grades that are awarded for examinations encourage students into using memory repetition in order to memorise likely answers rather than learning the relevant material; equally, if a student expects that grades are awarded on the basis of academic merit, they are likely to take part in class discussions and appear interested in the material , not because they care about the course but rather because they believe these factors may influence the grade that the teacher will award them. Andrews, Swanson and

Kugler (2007, p16) states that “students may not have a clear understanding of their abilities or may face cultural pressures to express aspirations exceeding their abilities”. Students who are aware of what is expected of them are likely to have more realistic expectations.

Students are increasingly worried about grades as grades are increasingly becoming the more important outcome of Higher Education, rather than the education itself. It could be argued that this is perpetuated by society and university institutions themselves. Universities are keen to highlight the academic performance of their students and achievements in order to distinguish themselves in the competitive environment they compete in. This is leading students to become more stressed and worried at university. With students attending Higher Education in record numbers it is more important for students to achieve good grades at university in order to compete in the workplace and wider society and this perceived pressure could be affecting student wellbeing. Baer (2013, p566) says that “Although reports of student distress have been largely anecdotal, scholarly attention to this topic and especially to what has come to be defined as students’ entitled behaviour has begun to emerge”. This pressure is then coupled with a greater sense of entitlement because of the way Higher Education is funded, as mentioned above; this is leading to a melting pot of difficult situations for faculty members in universities who are receiving both downward pressure from the universities themselves who need academic achievement to be achieved and for students not to fail and pressure from the students who are stressed and are making more demands on teaching staff for time and resources. Baer (2013, p575) suggests that “praise with corrective suggestions might be effective in mitigating the student’s experience of distress. When students become upset, management of the situation will benefit from a better understanding by the professor of what is being expressed”.

Students’ own bias is something that affects their own grade expectations and how they react; students, like everyone else, are likely to be subject to cognitive bias. Two of the main biases which may affect students are the overconfidence bias and the self attribution bias. The self attribution bias means students often take credit for positive results and blame negative results on other people. The overconfidence bias means students believe they are better, whether in performing academically or in their own abilities, than they actually are, which means they make mistakes more often than they believe. This feeds into grade expectations; students who are overconfident may expect better grade outcomes than they are otherwise going to achieve and this can result in a poor performance loop as the overconfidence may mean students put in less work and study less. With the self attribution bias students who shift the blame for negative outcomes are likely not to take responsibility, which again may hinder good grades. Marcis and Burney (2013, p74) identify two trends which are also influencing student and teacher expectations: “At least two trends in higher education may also contribute to the difference in expectations between professors and students. First, years of grade inflation in secondary and post-secondary schools may have established an expectation that class attendance and a “good faith effort” should be sufficient to generate a good grade. Second, if institutions, students, and parents regard universities as the provider of a service and students/parents as consumers, then the consumers reasonably want to be satisfied with their purchase”. When discussing the conclusions of a study that the authors performed on student expectations, Marcis and Burney (2013, p74) state that “The data clearly indicates that the students form impossibly optimistic expectations of grading outcomes.”

Biases do not just exist on the student side but may also appear on the work/teaching side. Teachers marking work may have their own particular biases which could result in a more sympathetic grading. This may not be intentional but could still happen. Tutors marking the work of a student who they have more rapport with and who contributed to class consistently may award a more favourable outcome. The way in which grades are achieved themselves may impact on students, because different grading systems are going to favour different students’ abilities; some may be naturally advantaged by this such as students who excel in memory repetition and exams. The pressures of operating in a commercial environment are also likely to filter down. Sadler (2009, p812): states that “Some grading biases apply across the board. An example is the practice of treating all students similarly but for ulterior motives, such as giving generous grades to mask poor teaching, or to encourage enrolments in future course offerings.”

## 2.16) Neoliberalism and Education

Universities have undergone many changes and, when looking at these changes, government legislation and political tinkering are often seen as the culprit. However, one key theme which has also driven change, and which could be described as a macro factor that has influenced government decision making, is the way in which the United Kingdom’s economic model has changed itself over the last century. This change could be described as neoliberalism. Neoliberalism is a form of capitalism which encompasses specific social and economic policies. These policies are heavily in favour of the free market. Neoliberalism tends to favour individual agency and more privatization, often at the expense of state ownership and disruption of services. Neoliberalism also favours deregulation over State control. Larner (2003) describes how neoliberalism in a basic form is the function of opening up State economies to private and global organisations. Davies & Bansel (2007) suggest that when further neoliberalism occurs, this changes the priority for governments. Private enterprise becomes much more central to government policy and governments become much more reliant in turn on private enterprise. The ramification of this means that governments and private enterprise have much more entwined goals as each relies on the other. If government’s goals align with those of private enterprise, it is rational to expect governments to introduce legislation and a domestic policy agenda which may be to the benefit of private enterprise and organisations, for example, corporate tax cuts. It is worth mentioning that neoliberal policies have not just increased within the UK but across the world.

Neoliberal values have entered the Higher Education system and this can especially be seen over the last 50 years; not only has the funding model completely changed but, as covered in other sections of this literature review, universities operate increasingly more like private businesses and education is more marketised than it has ever been. Holland et al (2016, p p1044) point out that since the recession and the austerity policies which followed it, governments tended to focus on productivity, which has led to education in science being much more prominent over non-scientific subjects.: “accountability and performance standards have led to the reductionism of research assessment in the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences to a process that is based on metrics and quantifiable outcome measures”. This not only implicates subjects but the students of those subjects too, as students could then be nudged through micro policy changes by the government in order to create more uptake in subjects which the government believes will lead to more productive graduates who will then enter the workforce. This then results in traditional creative subjects, such as art, being overshadowed by more STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) based subjects. However, Allen (2012) argues that when cuts were made to subject funding by the UK government, these cuts were evenly distributed and that it is science that has felt the financial pinch much more acutely over humanities due to the cost differentiation between providing science-based courses which require more expensive lab -based equipment over humanity subjects which do not.

## 2.17) Global Market Place

Globalisation is another factor which is affecting student and university behaviour. Countries are becoming increasingly interconnected throughout the world; this is also facilitated through technology and the ease of travel between countries. Potential students are picking and choosing places all over the world to study. This has helped drive the commercial nature of education both for students and for universities. Students who have the world to choose from are able to pick the universities that suit their own needs; being able to pick and choose puts universities in a very marketised environment because without the student numbers they will not be able to survive. Traditionally, universities would have catered for a set number of students from the local population, but with student quota abolished in the UK and the funding formula changed, universities are effectively also competing internationally against fellow universities in differing countries. This has given students greater leverage and greater power and forces universities into difficult positions.

An institution that falls below on the international League table and where students are not doing well in academic achievement may have an incentive to award students better grades or facilitate better grades in some form because it otherwise risks not being able to compete locally and internationally. If less people attend then the less well it performs financially, wholly relying on funding from students. In the last twenty years it can be seen that international students choosing to study in the UK has undergone a rapid change. Hemsley-Brown and Oplatk (2016, p6): “In 2000 the top three source countries were Greece (13.1%), Ireland (6.4%) and Germany (6%), but by 2010 this had changed to China (14.1%), India (9.7%) and Nigeria (4.2%)”. China also tops this area when it comes to postgraduate students and these figures are likely to change going into the future as international trends change. Universities are mindful of this and are investing in new facilities and services in order to better attract international students. It is also the case that international students form a good source of revenue for universities because universities in England are allowed to charge a higher fee to international students over domestic students, which provides another incentive to compete globally.

Since universities are now effectively competing internationally, students themselves are in some cases competing against international students; many business organisations and job roles operate internationally and are job positions are becoming fairly fluid, moving around the globe for the right business opportunities. In a global market place, where things are less likely to remain static, it is as imperative for people to attain the best educational opportunities available to them in order to remain competitive. This has led to behavioural changes in the reasons people are attending university which, as mentioned above, places more emphasis on the academic achievement over the education itself. This is a driving force for changing consumer behaviour because record numbers of people are now achieving Higher Education qualifications and competing against each other, which is making prospective students look closely at where and why they choose to go to university, which in turn forces universities to adapt and compete.

## 2.18) Concluding Statements

Examining the Higher Education sector in this literature review it is clear that this fast changing environment is affecting students in the Higher Education sector. Looking at the literature regarding the increasingly commercial aspect of education has provided the author with a good grounding in these issues. Looking at consumer behaviour theories and the way in which universities in England are operating, it seems clear that the commercial nature of Higher Education has had profound effects on students and universities. What is interesting is that the increase in participation and accessibility certainly helps students attain a university education but may be having a cyclical effect; as more people attain a university education more people feel compelled to gain one implying a systemic change that creates a degree as a commodity.

## 2.19) Research Gap

Having conducted an in-depth literature review there are clear gaps in the literature which provide ample opportunity for research. The first being up to date research on consumer like behaviour and expectations from students within the higher education system and the second being research which takes stock of and takes into account the views and experiences of teachers working within higher education.

Teachers working in Higher Education will interact with students at regular intervals, have many responsibilities and often act as a bridge between students in Higher Education and the institution itself. Many teachers may have been working in Higher Education for a long period of time and will therefore have seen the changes driven downwards from the universities. Gathering this research on teachers' views will be critical to supporting the research on student behaviour and expectations while also fulfilling the current research gap on tutors own experiences. Interviews from practitioners within the UK higher education system which are modern, up to date and discuss the current changes that have recently happened in UK universities, around the way the sector operates and on changing student behaviour and commercialisation do not seem to exist within the literature and this is a key gap the author seeks to fulfil. Taking the views of educators within Higher Education and their experiences broadly on the changes that that have occurred and gathering these views will help the author to ascertain how large this impact has become and may provide valuable insight and analysis which can be used in conjunction with other research to be conducted from students

Arguably the main research gap identified is the lack of in date research from within the UK university sector on the changing student behaviour and expectations. This has the potential to alter the relationship between students and universities and little research seems to exist on changing student behaviour and expectations that is applicable to the UKs unique HE sector. Much of the research that does exist looks at higher education from the USA view point and is not relevant the UK higher education system. Fulfilling this gap will involve surveying students and looking to ascertain student's views on a wide range of issues around university education. For example how they see themselves in relation to their relationship with the university, whether they do believe they are consumers and what their own expectations are. Often the literature takes a broad view of students as a singular group and does not take into account the many differing types of students and how these differences may impact upon their own views and expectations and this is a gap the author will seek to address within the research.

## 2.20) Research Objectives

Whilst the literature indicates a clear change in student attitudes and behaviour since the introduction of fees there remains little in the way of detail as to what the key aspects of this behaviour are most prevalent. Furthermore there is scant evidence of the impact this is having on academics. As a result we can now focus our aims into more specific research objectives which are listed as follows.

1. To what extent do students display customer like behaviour both in the process of choosing university and during the experience of consumption
2. What types of customer like behaviour is most prevalent in students
3. How does behaviour change as students move through the university experience
4. Is there a difference in international and home students
5. Is there a difference between commuting and residential students
6. How do experiences of academics compare with students behaviour

# Chapter 3: Methodology

## 3.1) Introduction

Research underpins all academia and the methodology section in this research project is all about how the research has been undertaken, the research philosophies, the research practices and the research strategy. Understanding methodology underpins the way a researcher approaches his research and gives the reader a better understanding of why and how the researcher used a particular approach when it came to the data gathering. Research has been gathered and analysed as part of this project and the methodology provides some of the prevailing academic theories as well as explaining the general approach taken. This will allow readers to understand the rationale and context behind the research, in order to better understand the results. Habib (2014, p22) describes research in the following way "Research is a scholarly, scientific, and systematic investigation to establish facts or principles or to collect information on a subject to be presented in a detailed and accurate manner." This section will cover areas which are relevant to the research project, the research philosophy, key methodology themes and topics and the approach and strategy of the research planned by the author.

## 3.2) Research Philosophy

Research philosophy is all about the way the author approaches the research, how data will be collected and used and the ways it will be analysed. This is an important part of the research project because it may determine how useful the data collected is and influence the results depending on how that information is gathered. Researchers will be able to justify the particular method of data collection that they chose which will give the readers a more clear understanding of the context, which makes the research itself easier to use. Novikov and. Novikov (2013, p6) define philosophy as "Philosophy determines an object as the entity opposing a subject in his/her object orientated practical activity and cognition activity". Philosophy determines how somebody may approach, think and react to something and therefore having a research philosophy gives the author a discipline to work within. Within academia there are different established philosophies which researchers may choose to look into or that fit their own outlook, which look at how a researcher may approach the research and the author will discuss the most common ones.

### 3.3) Ontology

Ontology is the study of reality and existence. Jacquette (2002, p3) describes ontology as "Ontology as discipline is a method or activity of enquiry into philosophical problems about the concept or facts of existence." Ontology as a philosophical school of thought asks questions such as what does it mean to be a human being and the nature of reality. It could be considered a branch of metaphysics in the way that it tries to answer questions relating to the nature of existence and knowledge around existence. Many different subjects may have ontological dimensions, for example questions such as "what is the universe made of?" delve into ontology and may have ontological answers such as atoms and dark energy. Ontological views shape how somebody will view and react to the world; the way researchers view the world will then shape how they conduct and approach research. For example, two different people may view how a business works from different ontological viewpoints which may change how they approach or interact with that business.

## 3.4) Epistemology

Epistemology is the study of knowledge and the theory around the study of knowledge which is why it is often cited as a philosophical theory; the word is Greek in origin with episteme meaning knowledge or understanding and logia which means to study science. Pritchard (2016, p1), on epistemology, says “The principle concern of epistemology has tended to be the philosophical exploration of propositional knowledge”.

The main themes of epistemology are not just around the study of knowledge but on the very nature and size of knowledge. Rationality of belief and how the knowledge may relate to key themes are part of this theory such as how knowledge is disseminated and on scepticism of knowledge itself. Some examples of epistemology questions may be ‘how do we acquire knowledge?’ or ‘how can we verify if knowledge is true?’

Two different schools of epistemology have developed over time, these are Empiricism and Rationalism. Empiricism refers to things we can verifiably judge with our own senses and the world around us and that can be proven to be true by experience. Evidence based knowledge that can be demonstrated through experiments falls under empiricism. Many scientific breakthroughs and tests would fall under Empiricism in the way they are conducted and judged to be true.

Rationalism places reason and logic over experience and observations as the basis for knowledge. Knowledge is believed to come from the view that everything has a logical dimension and that something can be viewed as true without needing it to be demonstrated as true. For example, that the moon orbits the earth may be something which can be viewed as true to the logical mind without the need to demonstrably check that the moon is indeed orbiting the earth.

## 3.5) Axiology

Axiology is about the researcher’s own values and ethical conduct. Researchers’ own values can play a large part in influencing how the research is conducted. Researchers that understand axiology are able to justify and use their own values as a basis for the research decisions they make. A researcher may pick a particular topic because it is of great interest and so justifying why that topic is important to the researcher gives the readers the context behind why it was picked and why the researcher finds that topic to be important. A researcher’s values may show in how the research itself is collected. Researchers who conduct more qualitative data through personal interactions may value that data collection method more highly due to the personal interactions and first hand acquisition of the qualitative data rather than collecting information more anonymously and likewise some researchers may value bulk data collection online believing it gives them more results or that dealing with respondents in person is more laborious. Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill (2009) make the case that researchers show axiological skills by showing how their personal values are used to make research judgments.

## 3.6) Research Methodologies

Different approaches are established within academia that researchers are able to utilise and use. This gives the researcher a framework from which to tackle a particular type of research. The choice of research approach, as shown above, is a mix of researcher philosophy, the nature of the research problem and the set of available research approaches.

## 3.7) Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is information gathered by the research that focuses on the quality of the research over the amount gathered and is sometimes called exploratory research. Tracy (2012, p22), on qualitative research, says “qualitative research focuses on the thick description of context and often emerges from situated problems in the field”.

This research is typically not numerical and is acquired first hand by the researchers themselves. Because this type of research is more individual-based it may only provide answers to specific questions asked. Examples of qualitative data may include interviews conducted by the researcher. This provides an effective and low cost means of collecting data that can be used by the researcher, and so may be favoured by people who do not have large resources. A downside to qualitative data gathered is that the results may lead to inconclusive conclusions being drawn depending on how the data was gathered, due to the variable nature of qualitative data. Leach and Onwuegbuzieon (2007, p558), on the usefulness of qualitative data, say “qualitative research is extremely useful for obtaining insights into regular or problematic experiences and the meaning attached to these experiences of selected individuals”. Researchers who believe this type of data collection is a better method may argue that it allows the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of people’s own motivations, beliefs, rationales and opinions when conducting the research. Qualitative research generally follows an inductive approach which looks at the data and research without imposing existing theories onto that research. Once the research has been gathered the researcher will then conduct an overview and look for relationships and patterns or answers from that research. A theory will then be developed or tested based upon the findings from that research. By analysing new research the researchers can develop their own recommendations and findings. This is in effect the reverse approach from deductive as research is gathered and then theories developed rather than theories developed and then tested against research.

## 3.8) Quantitative Research

This method of data collection focuses on an overall topic rather than on an individual piece of research and is often more numerically based or based on large amounts of data gathered by the researcher. This type of research, because of the large amounts of data gathered, is often analysed through statistical means. Examples of quantitative data may include surveys or observations. Rasinger (2013, p10) states that “the main characteristics of quantitative data is that it consists of information that is, in some way or other quantifiable.”

In terms of data collection, the use of the internet and online tools makes it fairly easy for researchers to gather large amounts of data online. By gathering quantitative data researchers are able to see trends and formulate opinions based upon the broad scope of the research but researchers will only be able to analyse the bulk of the research as a whole and not individually. Many researchers who value this research method argue that the bulk nature allows a wider scope of research to be conducted and the less personal nature leads to a more clinical and fact-orientated method. This approach is all about looking at the existing theories and research and developing a hypothesis and testing that hypothesis around that existing theory. The researchers are deducting based upon the current hypothesis and data and the research that might already be available and then discovering the validity of that research, while discovering or disproving current and new research; in this way the deductive approach is logical in nature.

By using this method researchers may be able to discover causal relationships between pieces of research, and can give more concrete findings based upon theoretical research. Andreas (2013, p1093) said that "Applying a scientific theory to an empirical system allows us to make novel assertions about the properties of this system."

## 3.9) Mixed Methods

A mixed method approach to research means that the researcher gathers both quantitative and qualitative research; mixing the methods of research may entail a mixed approach to gathering and analysing as well, in order to draw a more comprehensive conclusion. The mixed method approach can potentially yield better results than using one method. The mixed method approach can also be useful in order to better explain the data gathered by the researcher where contradictions may exist because the two data sets may give a reason for this, whereas drawing conclusions from one set of data may not give the research such insight. Hesse-Biber (2010, p1) states that "researchers are witnessing an influx in mixed method articles, book and handbooks"; this is believed to be because of the advantages that a mixed method approach has and so it is increasingly being used by governments and private researchers, which is further increasing its use.

Triangulation of data is something which encompasses the mixed method approach and it simply allows the researcher to gather different types of data on the same topic in order to better carry out and validate the research topic. When you combine research methods and data gathering the researcher is going to be able to analyse this data in much more detail, while cross-referencing the research or the underpinning academic theory. This provides more validity to the research. Differing methods of triangulation exist when it comes to research. Investigator triangulation is a method that makes use of multiple researchers in an empirical based study. This is particularly useful when research needs to be interpreted or analysed. Theoretical triangulation is another method of triangulating data which involves using multiple underpinning theories' when interpreting the research. By using different hypotheses in the research and comparing each together, results can be interpreted in different ways and compared together which could bring new findings and perspectives for researchers to analyse. Methodological triangulation allows researchers to use different methods to capture data rather than just one method. Collecting both quantitative and qualitative data often requires different means of collection. Heesen, Bright, & Zucker. (2016) defend the methodological triangulation method against methodological purists and that when used properly methodological triangulation can provide a pathway to a greater understanding of truth.

## 3.10) Choosing a Methodology

### 3.11) Rationale for the Mixed Methodology

By using a mixed method approach for the purpose of this research, a better range of data can be gathered which will allow both sets to be used together when analysing and answering the research objectives. Bergman (2008) states that the mixed methods approach is more sophisticated and researcher more flexibility in regards to viewing that research. Tutors and Students are integral parts to how universities operate and academia is dependent on the two groups co-existing and working together in unison in order for meaningful education to be delivered, both groups will have experienced rapid changes in the way education is delivered. Tutors are likely to be at the forefront of change as policy decisions and change are likely to be introduced to tutors so that they can change the way they interact accordingly with students. Therefore it is important to gather some qualitative research on tutors to better inform on the research from students when looking at the changing consumer behaviour. Collecting qualitative interviews from tutors may give much needed insight and context to the results that the quantitative data collected from students and when combining quantitative and qualitative data, will help to strengthen the overall conclusion, giving more validity to the research than one method alone. McKim (2015) looks at the advantages of using the mixed method approach and argues that mixed methods supports the validity of the research, while supporting the research with knowledge creation.

Having identified the key aspects of different research philosophies it is now important to justify the approach taken in this thesis. The main objectives are to identify the nature of student behaviour within what is a commercial operating environment. However, this presents some challenges. Firstly it is difficult to identify the changes in student behaviour over time as HE moved from a public good, free at source, to a product. This would require a longitudinal design whereby students are surveyed under both systems. An alternative to doing this would be to survey academics who have worked under both systems. This would require a qualitative approach such as interviews. In order to address the research objectives around student behaviour and customer orientation research was gathered using a survey in order to gather the views of students through a questionnaire. As such we envisage a two-stage research approach that starts with interviews of academics to establish the nature of change in students and then a questionnaire to identify the nature of student behaviour. This is essentially a mixed method approach but using a sequential design.

## 3.12) Designing Effective Interviews

When interviewing people in person for research it is important to adequately prepare and ensure that the interview is conducted in a polite and timely fashion and that the questions are designed well for the researcher's intended purposes. The interviewer should be prepared for each interview,; If the interview is being recorded on a device then the device needs to be prepared beforehand to ensure the interview proceeds smoothly. The interviewer needs to be aware of good time management and to choose questions wisely; the questions need to be useful for the intended research aims and they need to be well thought out so that the interviewee is able to understand what is being asked and is then able to give clear answers. As with questions which are asked online through a survey, the questions need to be neutral and free from bias, in order to ensure that the interviewee is not being unduly influenced and is able to give clear and honest answers; charged statements are to be avoided and the researcher's own opinions are not to be given during the interview, whether intentionally or unintentionally through the way the questions are asked. The interview should have a structure with a clear beginning and end; this might include a brief introduction and background to give context to the questions being asked. The researcher's aims may be laid out too so that the interviewee understands why the questions are being asked. Having a set list of questions that have been carefully prepared is important but it may also be useful for the interviewer to remain flexible and to be able to go off script if something important arises that may be beneficial to the research or that the researcher has not thought of; one clear advantage with interviewing respondents in person and gathering qualitative data is the human interaction and the ability to better understand the respondents, which can give a better understanding of the research gathered, over questions that are not asked in person.

The reliability, validity and the number of responses is largely a function of how well the questionnaire is designed and administered (Saunders, 2016, pp449-450). There are many types of question that can be used including ranking questions, category questions where you choose one option, list questions and rating questions. It is particularly in rating questions that the question construction is important.

Rating questions are very suitable for collecting data about opinions. The first objective is that the question is worded in a way that the respondent understands. Language must be unambiguous and aimed at the level of understanding of the respondent. They also need to be neutral, i.e. not leading or influencing the respondent to give a particular answer. Questions should ideally be relatively short in nature, to make it as simple as possible for direct answers to be given. If questions are long and are composed of many parts, sometimes called a compound sentence, it is likely that the people answering the questions will only answer one part and not the overall question; longer questions may also lead to a greater mental strain and researchers designing research questions should be mindful that the people answering the questions may not have the same abilities as the researcher. The questions used in this research will be direct in nature because asking question which are not specific in nature can lead to ambiguity (Habib, 2014).

## 3.13) Designing the Questionnaire Questions

The questionnaire was designed with the above principles in mind. Demographic questions included gender, accommodation type, academic year, and fee status (whether home or international students). These categories were identified as potentially being important for comparison, in particular to identify if there are different types of customers. For instance, the experience of commuting and residential students presents two distinct types of customer. Likewise home and international students explore a similar situation. Finally, respondents were identified by their year of study. The intention here is to identify whether students' customer-like behaviour changed with their progression through university.

The first question on the survey requires respondents to put criteria in order of importance when choosing a university. This reflects the early part of the consumer decision process. Respondents are required to rank the 5 items 1-5 with 1 being the most important.

| | |
|---|---|
| Locality | |
| The number of student firsts | |
| University resources | |
| University reputation | |
| Course availability | |

| Question | Reason for question |
|---|---|
| Huddersfield was my first choice | To identify if student was happy and if this affected answers to other questions |
| I seriously considered Employment instead of University | To identify if student evaluated alternatives |
| I seriously considered Apprenticeships instead of University | To identify if student considered alternatives |
| I seriously considered a year out instead of University. | To identify if student considered alternatives |
| Tutors should be available for additional help outside of class and office hours when I request it | Identifying customer-like expectations |
| Tutors should treat me as a customer | Used to test if students who said they were customers were likely to display other customer-like behaviours. |
| If I have paid fees I should be guaranteed a degree | Testing customer-like behaviour |
| I think the quality of university resources is good (Buildings, equipment etc) | Testing after-sale experience |
| I think the quality of university academic skills support is good. | Testing after-sale experience |
| If I did not get a degree I think I should be entitled to some money back | Testing customer-like behaviour |
| I should have a timetable that suits my circumstances. | Identifying customer expectations |
| I should at least get a 2:1 if I have been to 80% of my classes | Testing customer-like behaviour |
| I think the university has lived up to what it promised in its marketing. | Testing after--sale experience |
| If I did not get the classification I wanted I would blame the tutors and university not myself. | Testing customer-like behaviour |
| Overall I would say I have had a good experience at Huddersfield | Testing after-sale experience |

Figure 3: Questionnaire Design (Rees, 2019)

## 3.14) Choosing the Sample

Clearly the theoretical population is all UG students of Higher Education but it would be impossible from a practical perspective to survey the whole population. However, despite an assumption that all undergraduate full-time students could be classed the same, there may be slight contextual differences across universities. This meant that a focus on one institution would be preferable but here again there may be subtle differences between for example schools. This meant narrowing down the survey in the business School which left a potential difference between the 5 departments. Even at this level there was an issue with being able to collect representative sample sizes across all courses within the departments and as such it was decided to focus on the Management department. The final population consists of 2 major courses-business management and Business studies, with a number of associated courses specialising in particular disciplines such as marketing, finance and human resources. Using just one course to sample students from avoids potential differences in responses from students studying different courses. This is because students on different courses may have different perspectives and also it would require a large sample in order to ensure reliability. The questionnaires were administered manually during classes in order to optimise response rates and all 3 years of the Business degree (first, second and final) were surveyed.

In order to collect the data several methods were considered, both online and manual collection. The online approach whilst convenient is associated with relatively low response rates. Given the relatively focussed population size it was decided to collect samples manually. Permission was obtained from several lecturers to carry out the survey in specific classes. The approach to sampling varied for each year group. For year 1 and year 2 large lectures were selected and random sampling carried out. For the final year students, a cluster approach was taken and several separate classes sampled. A summary of the population and sampling process and results can be found in table

| Year of study | Population size | Sample size | % of population |
|---|---|---|---|
| First | 220 | 63 | 29 |
| Second | 260 | 93 | 36 |
| Final | 255 | 70 | 27 |

## 3.15) Research Ethics/Limitations

When conducting research it is always important to consider the ethics of the research and ensure that such research complies with any relevant laws and codes of practice. All research has been gathered from people voluntarily with permission and survey respondents will remain anonymous, so that respondents feel comfortable giving their frank and full views. All information will be stored securely online and used only for the purposes of this research project. The author does not foresee any ethical issues arising.

When conducting the research in person by interviewing teaching staff the author will give some background and intentions into the research project so that the respondents have a good understanding of the context of this research, which will enable them to better answer the questions. Thwaites Bee and Murdoch-Eaton (2016) discuss the importance of ethical consideration when gathering research, noting that if research is handed back to the researcher in the form of completed questionnaires or surveys the consent can be considered implied through the return of these forms but that research gathered in person through the means of conducting an interview requires a more formal means of making certain consent is given. To this end a simple consent form will be used, before conducting an interview in person, to ensure this ethical consideration is met.

The author is limited in terms of the time available, budget and number of respondents that can be accessed, however this has been taken into account when planning how to conduct this research. Conducting a limited number of interviews in person with a dictaphone the author will able to meet the aims and carry out the research without any foreseeable issues arising.

# Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Interpretation

## 4.1) Introduction

The following chapter presents the analysis and interpretation of both the interviews and the survey of students. It is presented sequentially with the interviews first then followed by the questionnaire analysis. The format is based on initially discussing the theoretical approach to analysing data followed by the application of those principles to the data from the surveys .The interviews produce qualitative data and as such require a thematic analysis approach. Thematic analysis is a way of identifying and codifying patterns in the data. It looks for similarities in categories or themes across transcripts and also helps identify relationships (Wilson, 2014, p288).

## 4.2) Analysis and Interpretation of the Interviews

The interviews conducted were in a free-flowing and open manner, in order to gather the general opinions from both academics interviewed and in order to allow both respondents to give their free and open thoughts on the topics discussed rather than tying either down to specific questions; this has the benefit of allowing the interviewer to steer the conversation towards particular points of interest that arise during the interview. The interviews have also helped inform to create a better survey which was used to gather the quantitative data as well as further informing the researcher with the first-hand experience of academic staff who have worked within the Higher Education sector for a long period of time.

## 4.3) Interview One

In interview one the respondent discusses his experience of student fees being introduced and how the expectation at that time was that, as these fees were introduced, it was believed that student behaviour would be dramatically changed as a result of the fees and that students may then come into a position of demanding degrees in return for the tuition fees. The respondent however states that this did not immediately happen and that they did not notice a discernible difference: “I couldn’t say there was any discernible difference in the way students were behaving, you know most of the noise was coming from the institutions and politicians and other interested stake holders in higher education you know.” However, it is then stated that they did not believe themselves to be customers even after multiple tuition fee increases. The respondent noted that student behaviour was undergoing changes in expectations: “students were beginning to behave differently, they didn’t see themselves as customers. If you ask them they said I’m not customers, but if you ask them you know for example would you do you think it’s right to see a lecturer when they want, they’ll answer yes to that". This does suggest that, from experience, these changes are having a long term impact on student behaviour and the way they interact with the university.

Examples are elaborated on, with the respondent discussing the balance of expectations was shifting towards students expecting and demanding more, given that tuition fees were now in the range of twenty seven thousand pounds and that students were expecting higher grades and more help because of the large amount of tuition fees they were paying: "I've had students come to me when I've maybe given them 55 and they've averaged in the first year basically slapping it down on the desk and saying I got an average of 70 in the first year, what is that all about I'm paying 27 grand for".

It is remarked upon that this changing behaviour is not solely down to the changing university system with the interviewee discussing a highly competitive job market which is forcing more students to compete against each other. This has the effect of students feeling under pressure when it comes to grades; if more students are awarded firsts, then this follows a circular pattern that more students are going to feel the need to also attain a first, in order to compete and this came up in the interview. The interviewee also remarked on qualification inflation; with more students attaining degrees, more students are feeling the need to attain a masters or even a PhD in order to remain competitive: "in fact its feeding upwards now what they've got to have is actually a masters and I think there are indications of I've got to have is a PhD."

## 4.4) Interview Two

In this interview expectations are brought up, with the respondent believing from her own experiences that commercialisation has indeed had an impact upon Higher Education. One such example given was that students expect things to be readily given to them and that they are much more acutely aware of the cost of education; this gives students the idea of paying for something and receiving something in return: "There is the expectation of, and it has been said in the classroom, 'I'm paying for this". It is then said that one of the biggest changes seen in the last 20 years was the fact that students are looking at education in a risk/ return sort of way and seeing education as a product or service which is paid for, with the example given of people purchasing items in Debenhams.

It was also mentioned that students' views on education itself seem to have changed with students now wanting to be informed on how to pass rather than the discovery of knowledge and learning itself: "I think that they want almost to be told how to do an assignment as opposed to view a discovery around bringing things together."

An anecdotal example is given of a student telling the tutor that the cost of study was quite high and that the tutor taking some of the student's time was costing that student money because the student had linked a direct correlation between the tuition fees paid and then what was being asked of the student. The respondent highlighted how this is not a true comparison and that tuition fees pay for much more than just the end product itself, such as a large library. One example given was that the university pays for a library stocked full of learning materials and journals but that students may not appreciate this.

Competition is then brought up along with the student numbers quota that was abolished. The respondent discusses how she believed the government wanted to open universities up to competition but that this has only opened up economic choice-based competition rather than grade-based competition. The respondent notes that this puts pressure on universities to differentiate where they can because often they cannot deviate much when it comes to the degree itself, given that universities have regulations and benchmarks that need to be met.

## 4.5) Interview Themes

These interviews seem to suggest and support the idea that changes have occurred in the way students are interacting in Higher Education, which follows what many academics also discuss in the literature review. Many changes have happened within a short period of time and these seem to be slowly changing student perceptions, expectations and behaviour though, as pointed out in Interview 2, external factors may also contribute to this too.

The general themes brought up in these interviews did seem to touch on the same topics, with both respondents experiencing very similar patterns from students, mainly that students had higher expectations, that tuition fees may be changing the way students view Higher Education, with it being seen less as an academic pursuit and more as a way to attain an end product. This supports what the literature review brought up when looking at students' behaviour. Woodall et al (2014) stated that students are showing more customer-like behaviour and that they are demanding more value from universities.

The universities themselves may be furthering these changes by the way they are marketing, treating and guiding students in the learning process. Molesworth et al (2010) conducted research looking at the mission statements of universities and the way that they are presented and believe that the way universities are marketing knowledge and learning seems to be more like a product that the university owns and it can then be sold accordingly and marketed, rather than an end in itself. This is likely to impact upon academics within the HE sector, as demonstrated in these interviews, and so in the next part the views of students and the quantitative data gathered from students will be looked at and analysed for patterns and themes.

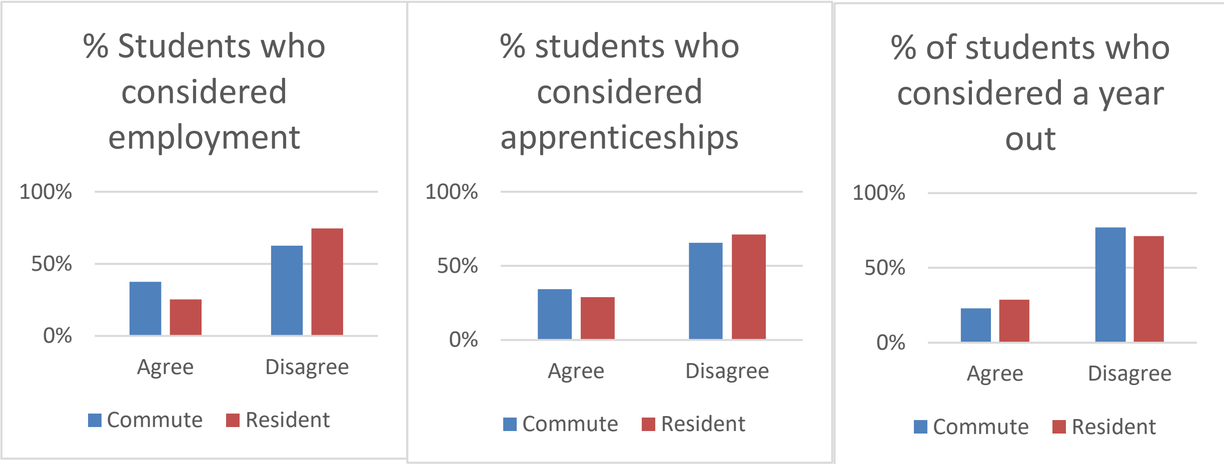
## 4.6) Questionnaire Analysis

In the following section the quantitative data for each questionnaire is analysed and presented gathered from the 228 respondents. The vast majority of the questions used a four point In order to test the significance of results the chi-test technique was applied. The chi-square test can be used to identify if there are significant differences in groups where the assumption is that they would be the same. It is particularly useful to test if responses to questions from different groups vary, for example by year of study and nationality.

For the questions where a Likert scale was used the 4 categories were amalgamated to make 2 simple categories. 'Strongly agree' and 'agree' were combined to make 'agree', and 'strongly disagree' and 'disagree' were combined to make 'disagree'. This was done because a significant number of cells across the range of tables produced, returned samples sizes of less than 5 (appendix 4). Also, where appropriate, a Chi-square test was applied in order to test how significant the result was. The standard test of significance was applied where P<0.001=***, P<0.05=**, P<0.1=*

## 4.7) Analysis and Interpretation of the Questionnaire Data

### 4.8) Considering Alternatives to University




Chi-Sq=0.12 Chi-sqr=0.03 Chi-sqr=0-41

Figure 4: Considering Alternatives to University (Rees, 2019)

Only one of these results are statistically significant with commuting students more likely to consider apprenticeships. Also, it is worth noting that students who were commuting were a lot more likely to consider employment than those who were resident. In both cases it may be that because resident students had tended to decide to move away from home, they were less likely to consider these alternatives. However resident students were marginally more likely to consider taking a year out before going to University and this may be an indication that these students might come from more traditional student backgrounds. What these figures do indicate is that a significant Number of students considered alternatives, indicating customer-like behaviour.

| % students placing category in 1st or 2nd place | | |
|---|---|---|
| | Commute | Resident |
| Local | 74% | 43% |
| Firsts | 7% | 10% |
| Resources | 27% | 39% |
| Reputation | 41% | 60% |
| Course | 32% | 30% |

Figure 5: Student Percentages, Commuters and Residents (Rees, 2019)

The table in figure 5 indicates the percentage of students that placed a reason in the 1st or 2nd place on a scale of 1-5 where 1 was very important.

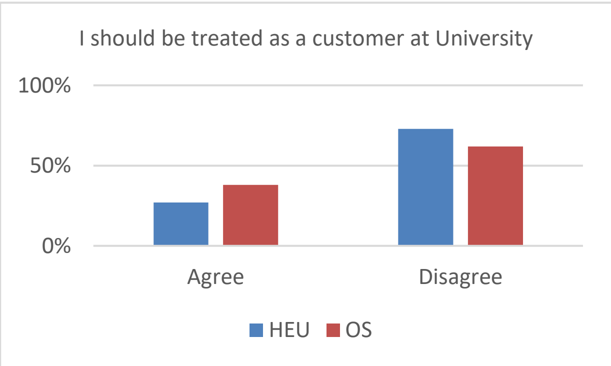
What this table indicates is that there are potentially different types of customers for HE. Commuting students focus heavily on the fact that the university is local and this has implications for the market. It means that a significant number of potential students are not necessarily affected by competition and marketing simply because they will only consider their local university. Interestingly, resident students are more likely to rate the number of firsts, resources and reputation as more important than commuting students. This is indicative that resident students are more likely to be potentially affected by the market and university competition.

Commuting students may have chosen to stay local because of family, or that the family may have helped them choose a suitable university. Mishra et al (2018) support this notion in the literature review, when discussing socialisation, and believe that family members do have a large amount of influence when it comes to consumer decision-making. If commuting students are being largely unaffected by the marketing of universities, it could be that this is because those students have already been influenced by their own family in the decision-making process and that they will prioritise this over any marketing material from the universities.

## 4.9) Students as Customers

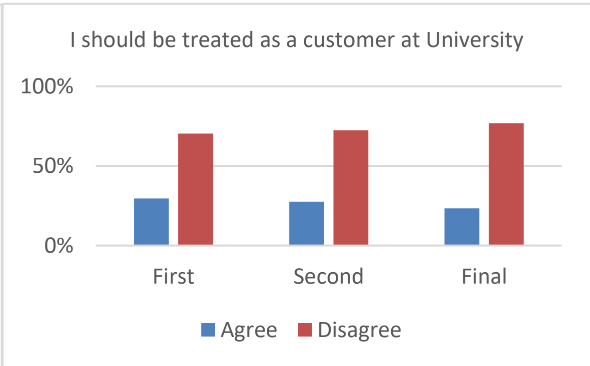
The next set of results looks at customer-like behaviour. Whilst we are unable to identify if students are becoming more customer like (we are unable to survey students who did not pay fees), we have distinguished between different years of study. The first question to be analysed is whether students actually see themselves as customers.

Overseas v Home/EU




Ch-Sqr 0.097

Compared by year of study




Chi-Sq 0.21

Figure 6: Students as Customers (Rees, 2019)

When comparing by year of study the difference is not significant but there is an interesting trend in that as a student progresses through university, they are less likely to view themselves as customers. This may be because they are increasingly exposed to the rigours and realities of university work and students who might see themselves as customers in the early years may be those who have dropped out or changed their own expectations. Students who progress will have a better understanding of how university works and what is expected of them, which will have changed their views accordingly.

Students who have had a positive experience of university may see themselves as part of the university family or university community and therefore will not see themselves as a customer in regard to their relationship with the university. Embedding themselves in the culture and values of university as they progress will likely have changed the students' outlook, when compared to first year students who will have just gone through the five stage model of consumer purchase behaviour. Huang & Turner (2018) point out that universities will market themselves to show prospective students they can offer relevant qualifications needed for the job market. This is going to be fresh in first year students' minds, whose first interaction with the university was that as a customer looking at a product but as students embed into the culture of learning within the university this relationship may change, which could account for the change in perception as students progress through university.

On the other hand, when comparing H/EU with OS students, the difference is significant at the 10% level. When reflecting on these results, there could be a few key differences between home students and overseas students that account for this difference. It could be said that overseas students often have much more invested in University than home students. The costs can be substantial. Some universities do charge higher tuition fees to overseas students and this additional tuition fee may result in overseas students expecting a higher level of service; in some cases this may not be substantially more but it should be noted that overseas students may be funding themselves and not all are able to access the student loans system provided by the UK.

There are the added costs associated with moving to another country and paying for accommodation compared to home students who may live locally or within commuting distance and could be supported by families or have a more local support system in place. What this means is that overseas students are likely to have much more invested financially, and are highly likely to have much more emotionally invested too. Cultural considerations should also be factored in which could include high expectations on overseas students by the family who support them, especially if those families are from a lower income background in comparison to the UK. Cultural expectations will cause additional anxiety, such as students worrying about failure because the added costs are much higher. Andrews, Swanson and Kugler (2007) suggest that cultural pressures can force people into believing they need to aspire highly and that these aspirations may exceed their own abilities. These factors when taken, given the additional costs in time, commitment and money, could explain that overseas students do see themselves more as customers with far higher expectations from the university.

These higher expectations will manifest in how the student interacts with the university and will likely expect the university to accommodate them. One such example may be where English is not a first language and so overseas students will expect the university to work around this and to provide additional support. It should be noted that some universities market themselves much more aggressively when compared historically in order to attract students, which could also give international students a higher level of expectation. Woodalla & Resnick (2012), when researching the difference in values between home and overseas students in a study, did find that both had differing value systems with overseas students more focused on the customer outcome, which supports what this research seems to be suggesting.

## 4.10) Student Behaviour and Expectations

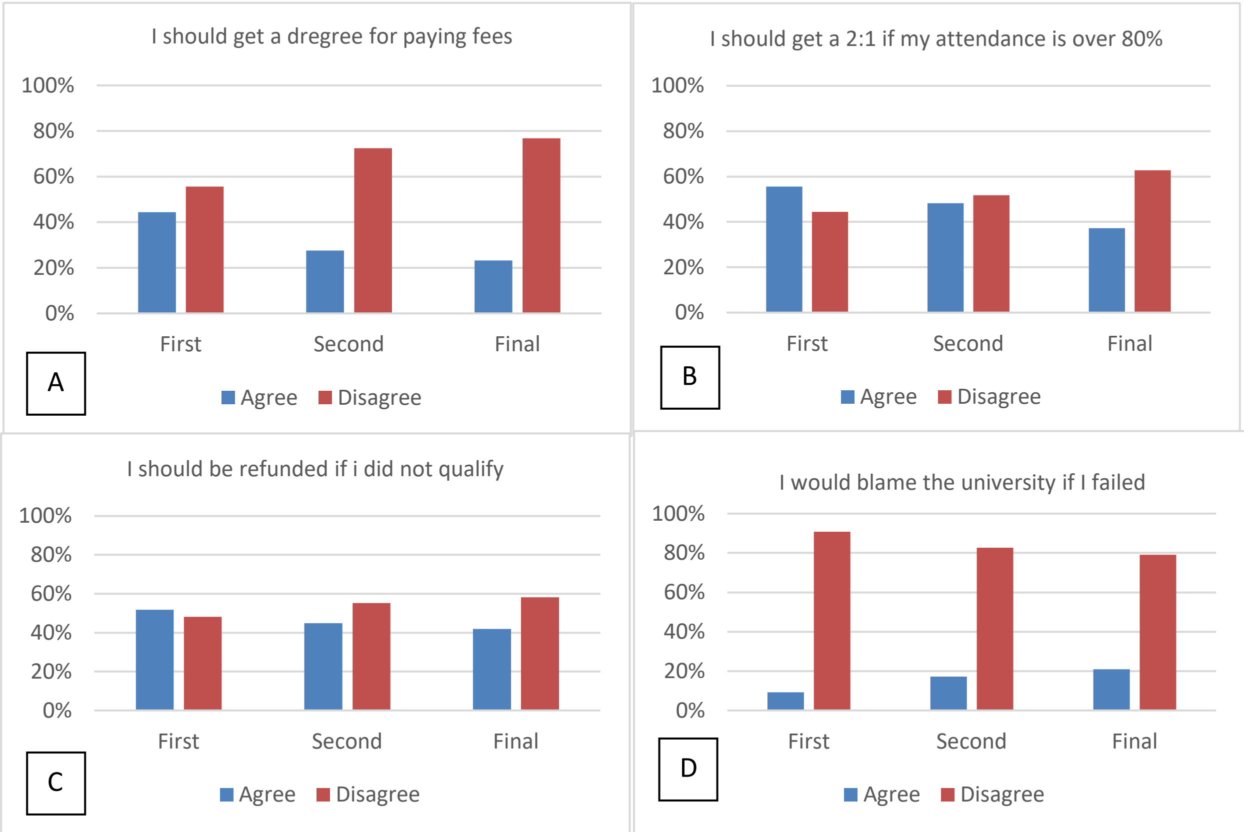



Figure 7: Students Behaviour and Expectations (Rees, 2019)

| | Ch-square | Significance |
|---|---|---|
| I should get a degree for paying fees | 0.14 | Not sig. |
| I should get a 2:1 if my attendance is over 80% | 0.14 | Not sig. |
| I should be refunded if I did not qualify | 0.77 | Not Sig. |
| I would blame the university if I failed | 0.06 | Not sig |

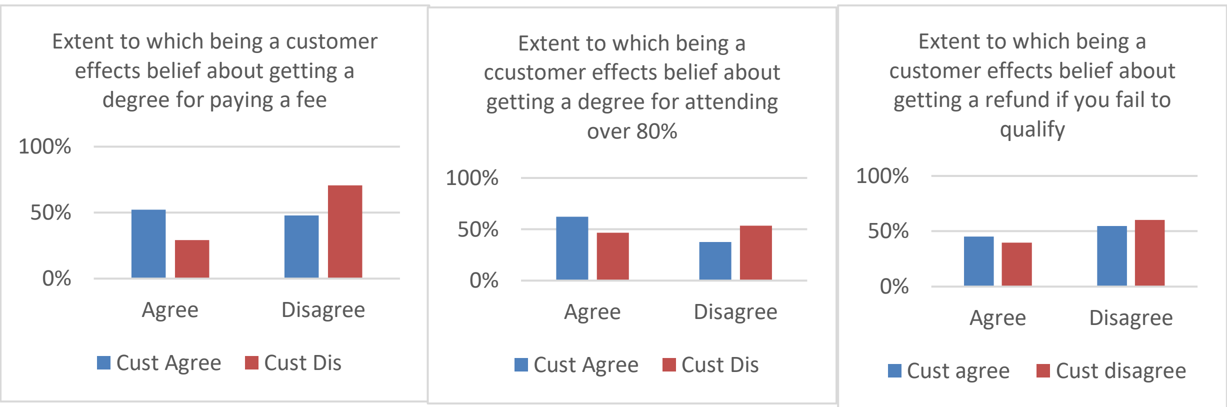
Figure 8: Significance of Results in Student Answers (Rees, 2019)

Looking at the results in graphs A, B and C, what does seem to be of interest here is that there is a reduction in consumer-like behaviour as they progress through university. This is an interesting result in that it could be expected that students would exhibit an increase in student-like behaviour as they progress through university. What these results actually show is a reduction in student-like behaviour. This could be down to students understanding the realities of university as they progress through the years. Some students who struggled may have also dropped out. Vander Schee (2011), when looking at students as consumers, discussed how universities can and do offer value to students but that it is the students who need to take part and participate in this process of creating value. Looking at the research, it could be said that students as they progress are taking part actively in the learning and value creation process and that this is accounting for a reduction in consumer-like behaviour and expectations.

In graph D it actually shows the opposite. Students who move through university are more likely to blame the university if they fail. There could be a few reasons for this. Students who make it to the third year may much more invested in finishing their degree than students in the first and second years. The pressure has also increased which will likely cause students to seek somebody to blame should they not pass; every mark in the final year is going to be much more critical to success and so more demanding-like behaviour may emerge. Students may feel that as they have upheld their end in terms of completing work and progressing through the years, they will be expecting that end product - the degree itself. After three years of study, with the work becoming increasingly more difficult, students may have become more disillusioned and less enthusiastic with university and may just wish to finish the process, therefore they may be much more prone to blame to university for their own failing rather than blame themselves.. Graduates compete not just against each other nationally but also within a more global labour market. Hall (2015, p456) believes that “graduates increasingly compete within global labour markets.” This could also be adding increased pressure on the need to succeed in the final year, in order to compete in a more global jobs market.

## 4.11) Customer Mentality and Consequential Behaviour

In the following 3 tables those students who considered themselves to be customers were tested against certain activities. Essentially we are asking if students with a customer mentality are more likely to display customer-like behaviour.




Chi-square=0.001 Chi-square=0.028 Chi-square=0.024

Figure 9: Customer Mentality and Consequential Behaviour (Rees, 2019)

These graphs measure the extent to which students who do see themselves as customers are likely to display certain types of customer-like behaviour. In all of the graphs the data shows that students who consider themselves as customers are significantly more likely to expect a degree just for paying, to get a 2:1 if they attend more than 80% of classes, and getting a refund if they fail. Woodall, Hiller & Resnick (2014) suggest that students are demonstrating more consumer-like behaviour and that this behaviour does come with increasingly higher expectations, which these results show for students who do believe themselves to be consumers. Wilson and Williams (2012) touch upon the point that the government often refers to students as fee-paying, it could be expected that even the change in language could be having an effect on student expectations when framed as fee-payers in relation to university. Gillespie et al (2010) also state that those who do view themselves as customers have higher expectations and entitlement and those people who do view themselves as a customer may believe that if they complain and kick up a fuss, this could have positive results.

An aspect which may also be considered is that grade inflation may be playing a part in these expectations too. With more students than ever before attending and achieving degrees, students may be being influenced by this in what they also expect to achieve. Bachan (2015) points out that more students are achieving a good degree classification and that this could be due to a fall in educational standards, making it easier for students to achieve higher classifications. To go further on this, it could be possible that in the view of university competition, some universities may feel the pressure to have students achieving better graded degrees, in order to look good to potential students and to better compete. Students who do view themselves as customers expect higher grades, and may blame the university if they fail. Marcis and Burney (2013) point out that grade inflation that has occurred within secondary and post secondary education will influence what students expect at university level.

| | First | Second | Final |
|---|---|---|---|
| Overall | 3.3 | 3.1 | 3.4 |
| Acacemic support | 3.1 | 3.2 | 3.2 |
| Resources | 3.1 | 3.3 | 3.4 |

Figure 10: Student Satisfaction Table (Rees, 2019)

In the table above the responses have been averaged for each year in each quality criterion In terms of student satisfaction with the resources, services and overall satisfaction offered by the university and there is no significant difference between the study year that students are in. If we average the total response by year there is a slight increase in satisfaction.

# Chapter 5: Conclusion

Commercialisation can drive different types of behaviour for those in participation of Higher Education, and this research gives some insight into the scope of change on student behaviour that has and is currently occurring in Higher Education. Franz (1998) discusses the pitfalls of consumer behaviour when student satisfaction as a customer is ultimately put above education. Rule bending and grade inflation are mentioned as things which can happen when students are the driving force in an educational environment, ensuring they are kept happy just to meet quotas and classrooms are full.

The Higher Education system in England has undergone rapid changes, with commercialisation being the primary factor. This has changed the way students now behave, perceive and use education, and it has changed the way universities have operated. Higher Education in England is increasingly seen as a necessity in order to be successful in the jobs market. This has a cyclical effect, with the increase in participation driving the need for more people to attain Higher Education in order to remain competitive. Education in wider UK society is treated as a commodity that students purchase through the use of student loans and the research seems to indicate that this is changing people's behaviour and attitudes towards the education that they receive. Universities themselves pursue this behaviour-changing dynamic by acting more like business organisations, with recruitment drives, marketing campaigns and competitive selling points all being pushed towards potential consumers so that the universities may remain financially healthy.

The tuition fee system itself can produce clear winners and losers in financial terms. Students from low income backgrounds are much more likely to fall under the 'plan two threshold 'for repayments. This means that while on paper they accumulate the debt, they won't actually pay it or will make only minor repayments until the debt is wiped thus effectively receiving a free education. Those students from wealthier backgrounds or who have large amounts of capital are also able to bypass the extremities of the tuition fee system by paying upfront or by repaying their loans rapidly, thus, avoiding the large amounts of interest that can accrue. The group which are most likely to suffer are middle income earners who fall above the repayment threshold but do not earn enough to meaningfully clear the outstanding debt while the interest accrues every month. This shows, in relation to the research conducted in this study that different students can also have different outcomes and may be paying for their education at different levels. Given that student loans are wiped away after 30 years, for many students in the middle the tuition fee system acts similar to a graduate tax. The system is unusual in that it creates perverse situations for some students. For example, a university offering lower tuitions fees mean very little to students if they are unlikely to ever come close to repay the headline amount borrowed.

When looking at the interviews conducted, it was clear that the experiences of these two industry professionals were very similar, with both explaining that things in Higher Education are and have been changing for a long period now. It is clear the commercialisation and the way in which Higher Education has changed has had a profound impact on these tutors and was changing the relationship they had with students. It could be that as academics working in Higher Education, tutors are the first to see the effects and changes that take place and that these changes may take longer for the student to perceive, or that tutors actually act as gatekeepers in keeping the commercial pressures they face away from students.

When looking at the results of this research there were some interesting and uninteresting trends. The views the students held themselves were not actually that indicative of customer-like behaviour, as one might have anticipated;

the trend for student behaviour was strong in first year students but as students progressed through each year this did seem to lower. The two main exceptions to this were overseas students, where the research indicated a stronger behaviour pattern in regard to student expectations and behaviour and third year students, who indicated they would strongly blame the university if they were to fail. What could be drawn from this research is that changes in student behaviour are taking place, but are more strongly prevalent in certain areas and seem to show less consumer-like behaviour in other areas. The trend of students showing less consumer behaviour as they progress through university does seem to show that the universities themselves are holding true to the values of learning as a means to itself rather than operating exactly like a business would, which could increase the student expectations. What was surprising was that, interestingly, many of these results were not as significant as expected and that students did not have strong views that were significant when asked these questions; this does seem to show that student behaviour has not changed in many other respects. It could be that students may simply be unaware of their own consumer like behaviour and that this would explain why their own views tend to not show as strong a preference to customer behaviour in comparison to the views of both tutors, who strongly suggested that they had experienced a large increase in consumer behaviour with more demands and increasing expectations. Saunders (2014, p10) claimed that “most students do not express a customer orientation towards their education”. Based upon this research it seems to be that many students may not think of themselves as customers first and foremost but that this does not mean their behaviour is in line with their view.

When reviewing this research, it is worth considering the impact that the internet may be having on universities and students. Online digital technology now plays a vital part of the learning process and only in the last decade has achieved widespread use and implementations within universities. Online education and learning facilities provided through the internet have changed the current dichotomy and has the potential to further change the educational landscape further as new technologies are developed. This brings with it big commercial opportunities, especially in a globalised context, but it may also bring additional competition as well as making education widely accessible which in the commercial content could bring additional revenue streams. Universities are often the first to implement new online technologies. Bowen, Chingos, Lack and Nygren (2013) mention the increasing use of online learning within the American system. The pressure of increasing numbers and less resources means that online learning provides a partial solution and helps keep costs lower for the universities because less on-site resources are used.

Randal (1998, p64) makes a compelling argument about the pitfalls of treating education as a business and goes on to say “ the job of education is not to delight the students –at least not in the short-run. Education entails more than packaging and delivering knowledge to passive consumers.” Universities are becoming a large part of the UK society and it is clear that more students than ever before are likely to participate in university at some point in their lives. If commercialisation impacts on students and the way in which they behave, then this could have long term ramifications for many parts of UK society, when students graduate and enter the jobs market. This research highlights the positive trend of students showing less consumer behaviour as they progress through university but when looking at the global market, the UK is behind many other countries in terms of how commercial its higher education system, which could mean student behaviour has the scope to change in the long term. Expectations, behavioural patterns and values have the opportunity to be changed and cemented by the university experience. It could be argued that universities need to be vigilant in giving students an education-led experience over a consumer-led experience so that students are able to more positively impact wider UK society after university.

## 5.1) Theoretical and Practical Contributions of this Research

The overall results in this research fulfil certain gaps represented in the current literature. Looking closely at what theoretical contributions this research adds It provides modern and up to date research on student behaviour. It is clear from the results that rather than looking at consumer behaviour and the way this behaviour may be changing, through a one size fits all lens, student behaviour needs to be understood through the prism of different types of students or customers in this context. This is to better understand the intersections apparent in student behaviour. The present study has come to this conclusion by looking at the changes being driven from top down organisational changes from the government and within the university sector. The research shows that different students exhibit different changes in behaviour and that some have vastly different expectations to others dependent upon the type of student they are. Woodall et al., (2014) studied students demonstrating increasing customer like behaviour. This is similar to research conducted within this study which identifies that international students, who pay higher university fees, show an increase in customer behaviour in comparison to all other types of students.

Harrison et al., (2013) highlights that the current tuition system details polarising opinions from students. These students can be categorised depending on how they view the tuition fees. This notion feeds into the concept of different types of students as customers. This is because how a student perceives the way their education is funded will shape the way they behave towards education much like a customer would. Harrison et al., (2013) points out the case of debt positive students, who understand the more commercial nature of the way their education is funded. Thus, these students are more likely to view university in a more positive light. Pennell and West (2005) supports this argument by adding that students who are less debt averse are more likely to attend universities. Burney (2013) makes a significant point in that ultimately, if people believe they are paying for something they are going to expect a certain level of service/product in return. Furthermore, it is clear across the whole of this research that it is only when undergraduates actually attend university their expectations are tempered and this leads to less customer behaviour. However, up until that stage it is feasible to suggest that student's opinions are being cultivated, not just the funding system itself but by a range of issues touched upon in the literature review. Marcis and Burney (2013) also stated that research suggests that students have formed unrealistic grade expectations. This supports what the research suggests for final year students who do show a behavioural shift in their third year in terms of what they expect to receive from the university and the support they offer.

This research has the potential to provide practical contributions especially to Universities themselves. By understanding student motivations better, they will be able to tailor their services towards the different types of students. Universities operate large amounts of marketing campaigns and by understanding the different types of customers, this should enable the universities to improve marketing and target specific segments of the student population. Pedagogy itself needs to take into account what students are expecting and how they may behave in order to better facilitate learning. Therefore, particular pedagogy is something that could be implemented in the future in the context of teacher training so that the new generation of teachers understand how to operate in a more market- led and commercial world of education. Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005) highlight how important the 'Social Exchange Theory' is to understand the workplace. For example, organisations being better able to support employees. It is important to understand the changing dynamics of customer's attitudes and behaviours. Educational institutions can monitor and adapt to this changing landscape in order to make accurate predictions of what customers expect of them given the assumption that students are indeed customers. In the future, some educational institutions may take different approaches to students such as offering an all 'bells and whistles' approach to degrees or staggering services towards different clientele as university's recognise specific target markets they aiming for. Understanding how expectations and behaviour breakdown between different groups of students with different circumstances will allow universities to adapt services towards those students whilst recognising that a 'fit all approach' may not be appropriate and that given the competitive nature of higher education, this is just one of the many things universities will need to adapt too.

## 5.2) Recommendations

This research has shown that there is an increase in the relationship between consumers and customers and being a learner at a university. Vander Schee (2011, pp32-34) highlights students as consumers in the United States, which is further down the commercialisation route than the United Kingdom: "Brand loyalty, or in the context of higher education, student retention, is vital to the fiscal stability of most colleges and universities" because universities rely on the income students bring, things that traditionally would not have been so important are now crucial for universities, in order to attract students, such as brand loyalty, facilities and reputation. Davidovitch (2013, p38) state that "In 1950s' Europe, the percentage of undergraduate students ranged from 3% to 5% of their relevant age group. By the late 1990s the figure had climbed to a range of between 36%53%.Today it has topped 60% in most European countries", it is therefore to be expected that the number of students participating in Higher Education will climb and that further research in this area could be critically important for both students and universities so that the issues that arise with commercialisation may be properly addressed.

What would be recommended for further study would be to conduct this research with learners who do not pay university fees, for example in Scotland, in order to see if students exhibit the same behaviour and inclinations when surveyed. Would students show different behaviour patterns if the fee paying element was not there or would the surrounding pressures, such as attaining high grades in order to remain competitive in the jobs market, mean students still show the same tendencies?. Examining the experiences of tutors who work in university environments where fees are not paid by the students might provide some interesting analysis when compared to the interviews surveyed within this research.

The United Kingdom's exit from the European Union is also likely to have a large impact on universities. Professional Engineering (2016, p9) claimed at the time that "a vote for Brexit next month could deepen a 1.82 million shortfall in skilled workers." Conducting research in a post-Brexit environment, when looking at student behaviour may also provide some interesting results, if less international students are able to come and study in the UK as easily as they currently do, this could actually increase pressure on universities within the UK to attract more students living within the UK and this could also have a big impact on student behaviour and expectations.

Further research that builds upon student's expectations and behaviour could be conducted into the growing online educational environment being established through the internet. This includes UK universities who are beginning to offer more work that can be completed online without face to face interactions. The universities may award degrees without having to attend traditional classes and instead teaching and learning through online classes only. This is touched upon in the literature review however, education delivered through the web appears to be a rapidly growing industry. It is becoming more apparent that this will be a serious contender to conventional brick and mortar universities in the future given the rapid pace of technology. This has the potential to bring about a huge change in behaviour as students and especially, foreign students who may opt to partake in online education rather than moving to another country and attending in person. Bychkova and Okushova (2017) highlight some of the recent changes in the way universities are operating in order to remain competitive online. Digital audits may be required on information that flows in and out of the university though the internet. A strong and continual social media presence is also a must-have feature. More technical aspects are becoming increasingly important for example, ensuring key words appear in search engines to maintain brand recognition and keep the universities high in the search results. Within this research it has been established that international students have a higher expectation from universities and exhibit increased consumer behaviour which may lead some students to partake in education that suits their own circumstances. This would impact upon UK universities attendance numbers and could mean a short-fall in tuition fees which will further exacerbate funding issues within the UK HE sector. University education delivered through the internet has the potential to alleviate many issues students may has traditionally faced such as language barriers, work commitments, child care and maintenance and tuition costs. Many universities rely on foreign students and the increased tuition fees they pay. However, if degrees can be studied through online portals and lectures delivered through the internet by respectable institutions, this is a topic that can be conducted through further research. Future research into this field of study will help society to better understand changing behavioural patterns in students and mitigate the risks from online only education.

By looking at the relationship students have with universities and  the views of students and teachers within universities, it is clear that this is a topic ripe for further exploration and that while students themselves may not view education in a direct consumer/purchasers relationship, the changes that have happened over time are directly impacting their behaviour and expectations and that this is likely to become more relevant going forward  if education continues towards commercialisation.

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# Appendices

## Appendix One

Interview 1     Time - 16:11, Date - 16/9/19

Oliver Rees: Thank you very much for agreeing to do this interview.  Can I just confirm?  You know as I've shown you before that you've signed a document- you're aware of the data so at any stage if you want to withdraw you can consent, I'll remove your research –it's not a problem.  Are you happy to proceed?

Interviewee: Yeah

Oliver Rees: Okay fantastic, so could you tell me a bit about your background in higher education, where you kind of start from?

Interviewee: Okay, yeah so its mid late 90s I started on something called the (something) teaching fellowship and I got a lecturing job at a good University. I wouldn't say the name but it was a Russell group university. And then I did that for three years, I didn't like it because the ethos at this university was research, research, research and I was more teacher. So I parted company after, after three years, after the term of the year contract was up. I was going to go back into industry because I was a bit disillusioned with what I'd experienced in terms of what was expected of me: it didn't really let me do what I wanted to do which was to teach. But I then saw an advert for a job in a post ninety two institution which was an area within my speciality which is operations management and I went straight for that, which was a fantastic place to work because everybody was at the same sort of like as me, they'd come out of industry with lots of experience. And the focus was purely teaching you know so you did research if you could but there was no pressure as such to do research and we did it well, you know student's service provided by this institution was exceptional.

Oliver Rees: Okay, so you do have quite a history then?

Interviewee: Oh yes, that's twenty three years in the industry.

Oliver Rees:  Oh okay so you've seen a lot of the changes that have happened in the higher education sector?

Interviewee: Can you be more specific in terms of…

Oliver Rees: In terms of the changes that have happened with the new governments, the way you said about twenty years ago, I believe university fees were free.

Interviewee: Oh I see, it's all about fees- right okay, yes so obviously when I entered the industry it was seen as a public good which it should be: free and universities would let everybody have a piece of the pie, they had limits on what you could so everybody got their students as it were and had this regulated, so like I did actually experience that period but then couple of years after I first came into the industry the fees were introduced I think, I think they tabled it in 97 but it came in maybe I'm not sure the exact date but I think it was 2000 when the 1000 fee was introduced. I remember at the time everybody saying this is the end of higher education as we know it but are students just going to turn up and demand their degrees for nothing or what have you, so I didn't really see a really over change in the way students behaved and it certainly didn't transpire that the relationships between students and universities was radically different, certainly the culture and what we did, so then I'm not sure on the exact dates but I think the next one was 2004 maybe when the 3000 for 1 year came in so it was 9 grand for the whole course, and that was quite a bit and now the response was even higher but even now I couldn't say there was any discernible difference in the way students were behaving, you know most of the noise was coming from the institutions and politicians and other interested stake holders in higher education you know.

Oliver Rees: So when did you notice a discernible difference?

Interviewee: That's a good question because it's sort of crept up, you know it's a stealth thing it's just interesting though I, my research area even though its operations, my research area because I was made a year tutor was in retention and that's what I did my doctorate in was student rendition, so I got very quickly got a sense in detail of students' behaviour and how students were behaving. So I guess really with that being my research area, I have become conscious of these changes. I would argue 2014 I think it was when the 3000 came in and it stayed like that for a long time, I think the next one the next increase was a huge increase.

Interviewee: Okay so it was quite a lot, I think it was 2009, you probably know better than the, was it 2009 or 11, 10? Yeah it might have been 2011 actually, that's when the big increase came in the 9 thousand. And it's interesting that, being in the middle of it okay, there wasn't a noticeable difference but researching student attention obviously brought me directly to contact with students, much more intimately than I had been and student behaviour and I've got data to show from some of my research that students were beginning to behave differently, they didn't see themselves as customers. If you ask them they said I'm not customers, but if you ask them you know for example would you do you think it's right to see a lecturer when they want, they'll answer yes to that, so do you see what I mean, okay because I've done some surveys and I've said well do you think you're a customer and most of them say no.

Oliver Rees: Right, that's interesting, so you started to notice as you've said it kind of crept in, it wasn't a big change it kind of crept in?

Interviewee: Yeah because we are in the middle of the system, it doesn't you don't get that feeling do you know what I mean because you're doing your job all the time, and it's very difficult because I think it's very subjective from person to person and it's often how you handle it, do you know what I mean. So students' expectations I think started to change, especially 2007/8/9 and as I say my research actually indicates that to a certain extent and I think that in the context of the way universities are behaving i.e they are now commercial led organizations competing with each other, and I personally think to a large extent that they are fuelling this acceleration in student customer-like behaviour, do you see what I mean? Because they are now competing, they're marketing and they are saying students come here, come to our university we will give you bells, whistles, the lot type of thing.

Oliver Rees: So you've noticed it's not just the kind of expectations are become more customer like/consumer like but what other changes have you seen with the student behaviour?

Interviewee: Okay, so more specific students' expectations that we should be doing more to help them pass, do you see what I mean, so if you think about it students at University have used that term, their degree as a product it relies on input from both parties, the provider and the consumer let's say. So students have got expectations always, you know you do a degree and you've got to work, the students have got to work. The question is that balance, I think it's gone more towards the students expecting us to do more of the work, so it's our responsibility to pass them.

Oliver Rees: Do you think a big element of that is, that you mentioned earlier as we've had these creeping changes, are the students you've been dealing with. Is it because they are a lot more conscious of the fees that they are paying that they expect that you should be doing more?

Interviewee: Well absolutely, that's what it all stems from isn't it? In their minds they are paying 27 thousand for this, the question is okay well okay, how much effort should they be putting in and a lot of students are thinking I shouldn't be putting all this effort in, and things like students actually think it's our responsibility to ensure that they pass, so you know things like grade pressure now universities one of the key performance indicators for universities is that the percentage of students that get firsts or you know get high grades, so what universities do to compete in that area is to get more students i.e come to our university you're more likely to get a first and what they do, they bump grades up its grade deflation and what this does is it feeds that customer-like behaviour, do you know what I mean?

So if we are giving more students high marks, especially in earlier years and even in the first year, they expect that. I've had students come to me in the second year, when I was a second year tutor actually say to me okay I got an average of a 70 in the first year I expect that in the second year. I've had students come to me when I've maybe given them 55 and they've averaged in the first year basically slapping it down on the desk and saying I got an average of 70 in the first year, what is that all about I'm paying 27 grand for. So thankfully, well you know I say I gave it the mark, which I know I thought it was at, and they say I want it marked by somebody else. Do you know what I mean, so yeah I think all of those things and certainly the commercialisation is driving those behaviours by the university and that is fuelling this behaviour by the students, so I'm just reacting almost naturally.

Oliver Rees: So it's almost like a cycle? It's been fed through from organizations and to universities?

Interviewee: Yeah so it's sort of spiralling, and you know they get into the final year and they are expecting firsts, right 20 years ago if you entered the University with 240 points about 7% of students with 240 points got a first.

Oliver Rees: Is this the UCAS points?

Interviewee: Yes, when you went to University with the UCAS points right, 7% of students who came in with 240 points came out with firsts, last year 2016 which is the data we've got, it was up to 22% percent of students who got a first from students who got 240 points, so all of these things it's the universities behaving like commercial companies because they've got to compete now the shackles are off, they are no limitations to recruitment and so on.

Oliver Rees: So you see this, it's only heading one-way?

Interviewee: Yeah, the whole thing is feeding itself, it's basically like a monster, and there's got to be a tipping point I think. It's just getting ridiculous now and its going to get to a point where we have to maintain the cohesion and sort of reputation of the British system that we have to try and find a way to dampen these expectations by students, and its individual behaviour as well the student's individual behaviour, they definitely are now more commercially thinking and you've got to remember they are under pressure as well. When I came into the industry the job market was nowhere near as competitive as it is now, I feel really sorry for students now they've been it's a constant market of types of jobs that students are fighting for and that all that is the concept of learning. 20 years ago I could say, looking at the students a lot of them are still like I want to learn, I want to be a better person. Now almost exclusively are like I need a good job to get my foot on the ladder because there are so many other fuckers coming out of University with a first. All they've got to have is a first, in fact its feeding upwards now what they've got to have is actually a masters and I think there are indications of I've got to have a PHD.

Oliver Rees: So this feeds into that grade deflation, crowded market, the more graduates there are and then that feeds into the more people that feel they need to become graduates? Is that what you are saying?

Interviewee: Yes and overall it's beginning to cause a detritus in higher education in the UK in terms of what it is and its reputation, do you know what I mean? All because of its commercialisation.

Oliver Rees: Right well that's been really informative, so I'd just like to thank you for your time.

## Appendix Two

Interview 2 Time - 15.13pm 24/10/2019

Oliver Rees: So thank you very much for agreeing to do this interview. So the first question really is for someone that's been in the industry for a long time, what are your experiences with commercialisation and its effects on higher education, broadly speaking?

Interviewee: I started in higher education in 1998, and so that will give you some context I guess in how long I've been in the industry, and I've worked in lots of different institutions. So that was sort of the pre context of the transformation of where fees have progressed and I'm sure that you have got the timelines of all the fees/ types/ changes that have happened as part of your study. I guess the overall and overarching commercialisation aspect that I have seen, and it's difficult to say if that's because of the commercialisation or whether it's a cultural shift of students' attitudes because they're millennials but there is an expectation of product.

And when I first started teaching there was the expectation of collaboration of learning, and that's quite a different classroom dynamic, don't get me wrong I don't think all students' expectation of a product is there, some still value that collaboration, and I wouldn't hesitate and say that it's actually around buying a degree. I'm not quite sure that that's right because I think there's other external factors that have happened, and I think some of the external factors around the commercialisation or not, some of them aren't the truth, some of them are expectations about where their roots have come from the education system lowers, so there is the expectation of things being put on a plate. There is the expectation of, and it has been said in the classroom, 'I'm paying for this'. And I think there are errors that are guided or misguided I don't know, but a guided expectation that because they can see a bottom line of a fee that will come out of their income at some future time, they are more aware of the cost, the economic cost of the participation in higher education. And I think students are more in tune to think about higher education in a risk return type way then they used to do, and that affects their level of participation in the classroom and it's almost I would say one of the big things that I've seen over the 20 years that I've been in this business is that they almost benchmark that education is like buying a product sometimes in like they went to Debenhams, and it's also changing expectations because I've never seen so many first class honours students that would come in here and go I'm a first class student who gets grades of a 2.1, and yet their expectation is I'm a first class student and I don't know if that's partly in the cycle of the commercialisation and I think there's a perception around, I'd always say that's there a certain service level quality that is there i.e I've always worked in the very context that I teaching has been valued and good and good practices have been appreciated. So I've always had that baseline of good teaching context, but I think that's now not enough for the student, I think the student wants more than just good teaching., I think that they want almost to be told how to do an assignment as opposed to view a discovery around bringing things together. I think there's more of an enthusiasm on teaching me as opposed to I will work, learn with you. And so all of those things Oliver I am seeing, and I have seen someone sit there and say do you realize I pay x amount and your time is costing me this, which is not true because they take the fee and equate it with my time but they don't look around the institution and we have a big library and do you know what I mean?

And so it's not quite a true context when they bring that back, certainly if something goes beyond what a student expects they are absolutely like 'I pay my fee'.

Oliver Rees: Wow, fantastic that been really informative and interesting. So just briefly would you say that, it was interesting you mentioned that it could not just being that commercial that's crept in you know you say age differences and would you say the universities themselves are in the way that they've operated and looking at you being a tutor, have they kind of gone down this line of rationality that we see more that the universities are competition and more student services and that gives the students expectations?

Interviewee: I think we are very aware of the competition, very very aware that you, I don't know if you know that the government changed the rules we used to have number control so Universities could only recruit a certain amount of students and they abolished that in 2012. I think that was for the SNC went away. So I think in one way the government wanted that to open up the competition, but its driven a economic choice-based competition as opposed to a grade-based competition, competition was always there around tariffs and student choice but I think it's complicated it's not just the price of getting into university now is not just on the tariff, it's around do I like the location etc, and because we all have to operate in the QA environment, a business degree has to have a certain context or any degree we have subject benchmarks and pretty much to do something different with your curriculum is harder because we all have to meet the same things in our curriculum, so we have to something different in other aspects. And if that different is not in the expectations of what my fee in return is giving me then I think the commercialisation creeps in.

Oliver Rees: Okay, well thanks very much for your time, really informative interview.

Interviewee: You're welcome.

## Appendix Three

QUESTIONNAIRE

We are currently carrying out research on students' expectations and behaviour related to their University experience. We would appreciate it if you could take 10 minutes or so to complete the questionnaire. It is entirely voluntary. Thank-you for completing this survey.

| Gender | Male | ☐ | Female | ☐ |
|---|---|---|---|---|

| Student type | International | ☐ | Home/EU | ☐ |
|---|---|---|---|---|

| Year | 1 ☐ | 2 ☐ | Final ☐ |
|---|---|---|---|

| Accommodation | Commute | ☐ | Resident | ☐ |
|---|---|---|---|---|

Please put the following in order of importance that influenced you when choosing the University of Huddersfield. Use numbers 1-5 where 1 is the most important

| | |
|---|---|
| Locality | |
| The number of student firsts | |
| University resources | |
| University reputation | |
| Course availability | |

Please circle one choice for each question.

| | Strongly agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Huddersfield was my first choice | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| I seriously considered Employment instead of University | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| I seriously considered Apprenticeships instead of University | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| I seriously considered a year out instead of University. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| I think I should have a say in the design of modules and assessments. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| Tutors should be available for additional help outside of class and office hours when I request it | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| Tutors should treat me as a customer | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| If I have paid fees I should be guaranteed a degree | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| I think the quality of resources is good at Huddersfield (Buildings, equipment etc) | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| I think the quality of academic skills support is good at Huddersfield | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| If I did not get a degree I think I should be entitled to some money back. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| I should have a timetable that suits my circumstances. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| I should at least get a 2:1 if I have been to 80% of my classes | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| I think the university has lived up to what it promised in its marketing. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| If I did not get the classification I wanted I would blame the tutors and university not myself. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Overall I would say I have had a good experience at Huddersfield | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

Thanks for completing this survey.

# Appendix Four

| ORIGINAL 4-POINT TABLES (Cells <5 count in black background) | | | | | | COLLAPSED 2 POINT TABLES OBSERVED VALUES | | | | COLLAPSED 2 POINT TABLES EXPECTED VALUES | | | | Chi-square P value |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

**I considered a year out**

| | SA | A | D | SD | Total | | A | D | Total | | A | D | Total | P value |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Commute | 11 | 11 | 29 | 45 | 96 | Commute | 22 | 74 | 96 | Commute | 24.15 | 71.85 | 96 | 0.411 |
| Resident | 4 | 13 | 12 | 30 | 59 | Resident | 17 | 42 | 59 | Resident | 14.85 | 44.15 | 59 | |
| Total | 15 | 24 | 41 | 75 | 155 | Total | 39 | 116 | 155 | Total | 39 | 116 | 155 | |

**I considered employment**

| | SA | A | D | SD | Total | | A | D | Total | | A | D | Total | P value |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Commute | 10 | 26 | 27 | 33 | 96 | Commute | 36 | 60 | 96 | Commute | 31.59 | 64.41 | 96 | 0.120 |
| Resident | 7 | 8 | 19 | 25 | 59 | Resident | 15 | 44 | 59 | Resident | 19.41 | 39.59 | 59 | |
| Total | 17 | 34 | 46 | 58 | 155 | Total | 51 | 104 | 155 | Total | 51 | 104 | 155 | |

**I considered apprenticeship**

| | SA | A | D | SD | Total | | A | D | Total | | A | D | Total | P value |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Commute | 9 | 24 | 26 | 37 | 96 | Commute | 33 | 63 | 96 | Commute | 24.15 | 71.85 | 96 | 0.029 |
| Resident | 6 | 11 | 16 | 26 | 59 | Resident | 17 | 42 | 59 | Resident | 14.85 | 44.15 | 59 | ** |
| Total | 15 | 35 | 42 | 63 | 155 | Total | 39 | 116 | 155 | Total | 39 | 116 | 155 | |

**I should be treated like a customer**

| | SA | A | D | SD | Total | | A | D | Total | | A | D | Total | P value |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| HEU | 9 | 33 | 76 | 37 | 155 | HEU | 42 | 113 | 155 | HEU | 47.32 | 107.68 | 155 | 0.098 |
| OS | 6 | 21 | 40 | 4 | 71 | OS | 27 | 44 | 71 | OS | 21.68 | 49.32 | 71 | * |
| Grand Tot | 15 | 54 | 116 | 41 | 226 | Total | 69 | 157 | 226 | Grand Tot | 69 | 157 | 226 | |

**I should be treated like a customer**

| | SA | A | D | SD | Total | | A | D | Total | | A | D | Total | P value |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Final | 4 | 12 | 38 | 16 | 70 | Final | 16 | 54 | 70 | Final | 21.37 | 48.63 | 70 | 0.209 |
| First | 2 | 21 | 33 | 7 | 63 | First | 23 | 40 | 63 | First | 19.23 | 43.77 | 63 | |
| Second | 8 | 22 | 45 | 18 | 93 | second | 30 | 63 | 93 | second | 28.39 | 64.61 | 93 | |
| Grand Tot | 15 | 54 | 116 | 41 | 226 | Total | 69 | 157 | 226 | Grand tot | 69 | 157 | 226 | |

**I should get a degree for paying a fee**

| | SA | A | D | SD | Total | | A | D | Total | | A | D | Total | P value |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Final | 7 | 14 | 28 | 21 | 70 | Final | 21 | 49 | 70 | Final | 25.40 | 44.60 | 70 | 0.140 |
| First | 12 | 17 | 30 | 4 | 63 | First | 29 | 34 | 63 | First | 22.86 | 40.14 | 63 | |
| Second | 12 | 20 | 37 | 24 | 93 | second | 32 | 61 | 93 | second | 33.74 | 59.26 | 93 | |
| Total | 31 | 51 | 93 | 51 | 226 | Total | 82 | 144 | 226 | Total | 82 | 144 | 226 | |

**I should get a refund if I did not qualify**

| | SA | A | D | SD | Total | | A | D | Total | | A | D | Total | P value |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Final | 10 | 20 | 24 | 16 | 70 | Final | 30 | 40 | 70 | Final | 30.66 | 39.34 | 70 | 0.767 |
| First | 14 | 16 | 25 | 8 | 63 | First | 30 | 33 | 63 | First | 27.60 | 35.40 | 63 | |
| Second | 14 | 25 | 34 | 20 | 93 | second | 39 | 54 | 93 | second | 40.74 | 52.26 | 93 | |
| Total | 38 | 61 | 83 | 44 | 226 | Total | 99 | 127 | 226 | Total | 99 | 127 | 226 | |

**I should get a 2:1 for 80% attendance**

| | SA | A | D | SD | Total | | A | D | Total | | A | D | Total | P value |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Final | 13 | 16 | 22 | 19 | 70 | Final | 29 | 41 | 70 | Final | 35.93 | 34.07 | 70 | 0.137 |
| First | 10 | 25 | 24 | 4 | 63 | First | 35 | 28 | 63 | First | 32.34 | 30.66 | 63 | |
| Second | 24 | 28 | 27 | 14 | 93 | second | 52 | 41 | 93 | second | 47.73 | 45.27 | 93 | |
| Total | 47 | 69 | 72 | 38 | 226 | Total | 116 | 110 | 226 | Total | 116 | 110 | 226 | |

**If I did not get the classification I wanted I would blame the tutors and university not myself.**

| | SA | A | D | SD | Total | | A | D | Total | | A | D | Total | P value |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Final | 2 | 10 | 33 | 25 | 70 | Final | 12 | 58 | 70 | Final | 13.32 | 56.68 | 70 | 0.064 |
| First | 2 | 5 | 37 | 19 | 63 | First | 7 | 56 | 63 | First | 11.99 | 51.01 | 63 | |
| Second | 3 | 21 | 36 | 33 | 93 | second | 24 | 69 | 93 | second | 17.69 | 75.31 | 93 | |
| Total | 7 | 36 | 106 | 77 | 226 | Total | 43 | 183 | 226 | Total | 43 | 183 | 226 | |

**I should get a degree for paying a fee**

| Customer | SA | A | D | SD | Total | Customer | A | D | Total | I am a cus | A | D | Total | P value |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| SA | 7 | 4 | 3 | 1 | 15 | A | 36 | 33 | 69 | A | 25.04 | 43.96 | 155 | 0.001 |
| A | 11 | 14 | 21 | 8 | 54 | D | 46 | 111 | 157 | D | 56.96 | 100.04 | 71 | *** |
| D | 9 | 30 | 53 | 24 | 116 | Total | 82 | 144 | 226 | Total | 69 | 157 | 226 | |
| SD | 4 | 3 | 16 | 18 | 41 | | | | | | | | | |
| Total | 31 | 51 | 93 | 51 | 226 | | | | | | | | | |

**I should get a 2:1 for 80% attendance**

| Customer | SA | A | D | SD | Total | I am a cust | A | D | Total | I am a cus | A | D | Total | P value |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| SA | 3 | 5 | 2 | 5 | 15 | A | 43 | 26 | 69 | A | 35.42 | 33.58 | 155 | 0.028 |
| A | 15 | 20 | 15 | 4 | 54 | D | 73 | 84 | 157 | D | 80.58 | 76.42 | 71 | ** |
| D | 23 | 36 | 41 | 16 | 116 | Total | 116 | 110 | 226 | Total | 69 | 157 | 226 | |
| SD | 6 | 8 | 14 | 13 | 41 | | | | | | | | | |
| Total | 47 | 69 | 72 | 38 | 226 | | | | | | | | | |

**I expect a refund if I didn't qualify**

| | SA | A | D | SD | Total | I am a cust | A | D | Total | I am a cus | A | D | Total | P value |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| SA | 4 | 5 | 4 | 2 | 15 | A | 38 | 31 | 69 | A | 30.23 | 38.77 | 155 | 0.024 |
| A | 11 | 18 | 15 | 10 | 54 | D | 61 | 96 | 157 | D | 68.77 | 88.23 | 71 | ** |
| D | 18 | 29 | 52 | 17 | 116 | Total | 99 | 127 | 226 | Total | 69 | 157 | 226 | |
| SD | 5 | 9 | 12 | 15 | 41 | | | | | | | | | |
| Total | 38 | 61 | 83 | 44 | 226 | | | | | | | | | |