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Internationalisation Strategies in UK Universities

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A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Research

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Abstract

This study explores the development of internationalisation strategies in higher education institutions and examines the importance of the international student social experience as a strategic priority in higher education. The specific motivation for the study was to link the relatively new concepts of the internationalisation of HE and the international student social experience to the strategic management literature.

A Grounded Theory methodology was employed using four universities as case studies. Data was collected via semi-structured in-depth interviews and document review, which were analysed using the constant comparative method. This research forms a basis for understanding the nature of the internationalisation strategies in HEIs summarised in the following three main findings:

The study has helped to develop a model which illustrates the evolution of the internationalisation agenda at higher education institutions and demonstrates how the term internationalisation emerged and became a strategic objective. The three developmental phases of this model, as universities mature from operational to strategic, can be used as a roadmap by universities who have just started to establish an on-the-ground international presence so that they can drive the internationalisation process forward and give it a higher profile for an increasingly globalised and competitive future.

The findings led to the development of a framework which describes the international strategic management process in HEIs. The on-going 5-step process of: identifying vision, mission and objectives, conducting a situational analysis, formulating strategy, implementing strategy, evaluating and monitoring performance can be used as a guideline for HEIs to formulate and implement their international strategies effectively.

The study found that it is important for the international student social experience to be embedded within the international strategies of HEIs in order to ensure socio-academic integration. It suggests that a successful holistic 'international student experience' should achieve a balance between imparting academic knowledge and skills, providing an outstanding social life and preparing students to be global citizens. This perspective can positively impact on international strategies at HEIs which seek to provide a 'first class' experience to home and international students.

Keywords: internationalisation, international strategy, international students, international student experience, social experience.

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List of Abbreviations

EU	European Union
CGT	Classic Grounded Theory
GT	Grounded Theory
GTM	Grounded Theory Methodology
HE	Higher Education
HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency
ISB	International Student Barometer
KPIs	Key Performance Indicators
NSS	National Student Survey
PVC	Pro-Vice Chancellor
SU	Students' Union
SWOT	Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities Threats
UK	United Kingdom
VC	Vice Chancellor

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background and Objectives

With the increasing number of international students crossing national borders and seeking higher education (HE) - almost 4.5 million in 2012 which was more than double the 2.1 million internationally mobile students in 2000 - policy makers are becoming aware of the significance of internationalisation and acculturation (OECD, 2014). Educational institutions in the global market place are witnessing severe competition to attract international students due to the mass expansion of international student mobility and the continuously growing number of competitors as well (Conlon, et al., 2011). The great diversity of the international student population brings a varied range of expectations and needs (Hawkes, 2014). Thus, an investigation of how HEIs manage the integration of international students, embrace cultural diversity on campuses, and provide a first class experience for international students is of considerable importance. Therefore, this study aims to examine internationalisation strategies at UK universities, their key elements and how these strategies are being formed. Rather than discussing departmental or module level internationalisation initiatives, the focus of the study is at a strategic level making reference to literature in the field of strategic management.

Scholars have different perspectives when looking at strategies and this research looks at strategies from Mintzberg and Waters' (1985) angle. They claimed that real-world strategies lie on a continuum, from 'Planned Strategies' which belong to the extreme deliberate pole where strategy is conceived theoretically and practically as limited to intended behaviours, analytical processes and action plans, through to 'Imposed Strategies', which belong to the extreme emergent pole where strategy is considered as a pattern of unplanned actions emerging to adapt to environmentally imposed changes. Other strategies which fall in-between these two opposing extremes differ in their degree of blending the deliberate and emergent perspectives together (Mintzberg and Waters, 1985).

Hence, the research aims to explore whether international strategies in UK HEIs are deliberately planned, emerge over time or are somewhere in-between. Lots of texts have addressed 'internationalisation' in the HE sector in terms of its context, benefits and implications (Jiang and Carpenter, 2013; Maringe, 2010) and some of them are, more or less, sort of guides and practises for HEIs (Ministry of Education, 2009; European University Association, 2013;

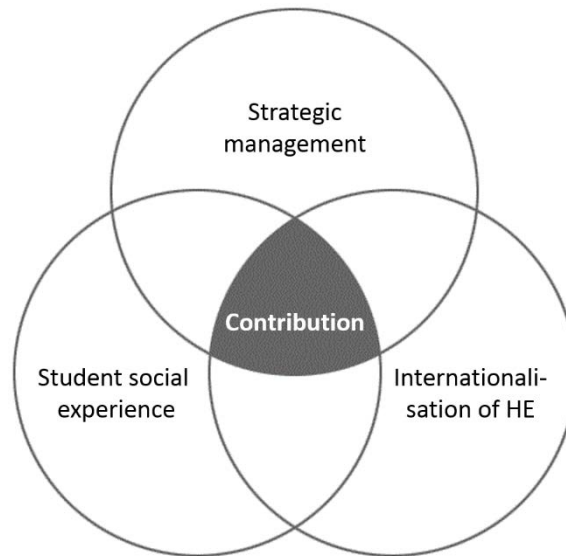
Hénard, Diamond and Roseveare, 2012); however, the subject is not addressed from a strategic point of view.

Strategic management in HE helps universities to manage change and maintain sustainable advantage (Rothaermel, 2012). However, researchers tend to focus their attention on the strategic management of perceived core functions including the academic experience, finance, resource allocation, and research funding (Bassa and Ranganathan, 2013; Ruben, 2010; Shattock, 2000). Yet, there is no clear picture about the role of the social experience in international education, which is another important area which this research attempts to examine. An international student experience is defined not only by classroom-based experience but also by social experience. It is common for international strategies to concentrate on the former and neglect the latter, but experience shows that these two elements should support each other and socio-academic integration is important (Hawkes, 2014).

Due to the cultural diversity on campuses and language barriers (Shupe, 2007; Sawir, et al., 2012; Harvey, 2014), international students tend to face social stressors including cultural distance, family pressure, psychological adjustment, and difficulty in making new international friends during their stay in the host countries; all of which have a great impact on their social satisfaction and academic performance simultaneously (Smith and Khawaja, 2011; Sawir, et al., 2008). This has had a tremendous impact on some areas of universities worldwide and has clearly identified the need for change in order to respond to the rapidly changing contextual factors and to fulfil international students' demands. Although a large body of the available literature in HE policy has already shed light on the importance of an international student social experience (Melnick, Kaur and Yu, 2011; Montgomery, 2010), its position at the strategic level remains less clear.

This indicates that there is a substantial gap in linking the internationalisation of HE and the student social experience to universities' strategic management. This research aims to fill in this gap in knowledge, as simplified in Figure 1. The thesis is written from UK universities' perspective but can be adapted for the analysis of educational institutions in other countries and even different types of institutions.

Figure 1: Research contribution to the existing body of knowledge



Indeed, reviewing the literature helps to determine and formulate insightful research questions to be investigated; unlike the misconception that answers could be found in the literature, instead, it is a means to an end (Cooper, 1984). However, only an overview of the previous research in regard to internationalisation in higher education institutions (HEIs), strategic management in HE and the international student social experience has been used in the early stages of the research study to determine the main research questions as follows:

- How are international strategies being formed in UK HEIs? And where do they lie on Mintzberg and Waters' deliberate/emergent continuum?
- To what extent is the international student social experience being embedded within the context of strategic management in HE?

1.2 Research Aims and Design

This research has a dual purpose. The first is to explore how universities' international strategies are being formed and where they lie on Mintzberg and Waters' (1985) deliberate/emergent continuum, which leads directly to the second purpose; to examine universities' strategic priorities and the importance of the international student social experience within the context of strategic management. So the approach to this study is clearly an exploratory/interpretive perspective. A qualitative approach using in-depth semi-

structured interviews and document review was adopted to enable a rich and informative evaluation. The study employed a modified form of Grounded Theory (GT) where concepts are generated from empirical data rather than from existing literature. A brief literature review was conducted in the beginning of the research mainly for the purposes of identifying research questions that remain to be answered and to guide the collection and analysis of data, then an intensive literature review was carried out after generating the theory in order to be validated (Corbin and Strauss 2008).

A comparative study of four different universities in the UK HE sector was conducted in order to better understand the nature of the international strategies in different settings and to create a broader perspective. Marshall (1996) declared that the non-probability sampling is more appropriate for qualitative studies, rather than the random sampling as it should best serve the research's aims and characteristics. Therefore, a non-probability purposive sampling technique (theoretical sampling) was applied for conducting the interviews. There was a long list of different universities to be chosen to participate in this research; however, accessibility was the key element in making this decision. As the research questions relate to some strategic information, interviewees needed to be from the top level management to collect prompt and accurate data. Thus, a few number of universities have been contacted by email and those who replied back and showed interest were interviewed.

1.3 Study Justifications

Internationally, the UK is ranked second among the most attractive destinations for international students, after the United States, with an overall international market share of 10.7% in 2000 which increased to 12.6% in 2012 (Universities UK, 2014b; OECD, 2014). According to the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), the overall number of international students (non UK) enrolled in UK HEIs witnessed a major increase over the past few years as shown in the Table below.

Table 1: Number of international students enrolled in UK HE, 2007/08-2013/14

Academic year	Number of international students
2013/14	435,500 (HESA, 2015)
2012/13	425,265 (HESA, 2015)
2011/12	435,235 (HESA, 2013)
2010/11	428,225 (HESA, 2012)
2009/10	405,805 (HESA, 2012)
2008/09	368,970 (HESA, 2010)
2007/08	341,790 (HESA, 2010)

International education exports bring huge benefits to the UK economy and were worth £13.6bn in 2011/2012 from tuition fees and other living expenses (HM Government, 2013). This is besides internationalising the academic environment and campus life (Universities UK, 2014a). Also, international students with positive experiences act as travelling ambassadors sharing their experiences and marketing for UK HE and the British culture in their home countries. This promotes potential educational and business links and bring more economic and non-economic benefits (Mellors-Bourne, et al., 2013). Despite the growth rate of UK HE, it needs to maintain and enhance its leading position in the competitive global market due to the tough competition (Universities UK, 2012).

The decision to choose a comparative study research design lies in the fact that it broadens the sight and widens the horizon. According to Azarian (2011), results generated from comparative studies permit the importation of different methods in order to enhance the efficiency of society's affairs, especially since 'international strategy' is a fairly new concept in the literature. Hence, combining the final results can help other universities to effectively plan for their international strategies and to identify best practice for a first class international student experience. Doing a comparison helps to make sense of the divergences and variations as it captures both similarities and differences (May, 2011). So it looks at the international strategy from four different perspectives as each university has its own strategic management approach, each has different tactics and each has a different story of how international strategy evolved. Last but not least, the comparative approach does not stop at spotting such similari-

ties and differences as it helps to extract insights and causal relationships as well (May, 2011).

1.4 Thesis Outline

Chapter one provides a background to the research subject area as well as the research's aims and a brief description of the methodology. In chapter two and three, a review of the literature is presented. Due to the fact that there is no existing literature that attempts to examine international strategies in HEIs in-detail and look at the student social experience as part of it, this thesis has two literature review chapters and aims to close this gap in research. Chapter two addresses internationalisation in HE and chapter three covers the strategic management of HE and the scope of strategy in HEIs. Chapter four (methodology) addresses the research approach, paradigm, and data collection and analysis plan. Chapter five presents all the research results from the data collection phase. This is followed by a discussion and analysis of the key findings in chapter six. Finally, the conclusion chapter sums up the key research findings, theoretical contribution, implications and suggestions for further research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

(Internationalisation of Higher Education)

2.1 Introduction

The main purpose of reviewing the literature in this research was to scan previous studies on internationalisation and strategies in HEIs in order to identify the key data collection requirements for the primary research to be conducted (Denscombe, 1998). The approach adopted was in line with the current practice of grounded research which recommends at least a preliminary search of the literature to become familiar with the existing body of knowledge prior to the data collection phase (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, and Lowe, 1991). Thus, a brief review of the literature was undertaken before collecting the data, followed by an intensive review after generating the theory in order to validate it. The research design process, research approach and applied methods are discussed further in chapter four. To begin with, this chapter provides an overview of the scholarly literature on internationalisation in the UK HE system.

Section 2.2 investigates the background and the state of the HE system in general, and in the UK in particular, before looking at internationalisation of HEIs. It provides a forecast for global student mobility in the next decade and its implications. Section 2.3 looks at the evolution of 'internationalisation' as a new concept and the research development of the internationalisation in HE. Section 2.4 identifies the different internationalisation agendas in HEIs while examining the current literature on the internationalisation practices in universities as well as the implementation of those agendas.

2.2 UK Higher Education Background and Current Trends

Globalisation has affected many aspects of daily life, including education. As mentioned earlier, the number of international students enrolled in UK HEIs has increased dramatically in the past few years. It is expected that the demand will continue to rise in the coming few years as well; a team of the British Council and IDP Education Australia staff conducted a research project in 2004 to forecast the international student mobility from 144 countries in

2020; the research anticipated that the global demand for HE places will increase from 2.1 million places in 2003 to about 5.8 million in 2020 (Böhm, et al., 2004). As part of this, the demand for international student places in the five major English speaking destination countries (USA, UK, Australia, Canada, New Zealand) will increase from 1 million to approximately 2.6 million places. For the UK in particular, there are different scenarios depending on the country's performance compared to other destination countries. The 'optimistic scenario' forecasted that the total demand for international student places will increase to reach 870,000 by 2020 with an average annual growth of 8 per cent; this is if the UK managed to have effective strategies to improve its performance for all its key attractiveness factors over the forecast period (Böhm, et al., 2004). This optimistic scenario might be closer to the reality since it had predicted also the demand to increase to 400,000 by 2010 which happened to come true (see Table 1).

Another report produced by the British Council (2013) which extended the forecasts and analysis from 2020 to 2024 based on the latest available data up to 2011 foresees the same vision of growing the international student body, but at a different pace, from 3.04 million in 2011 to 3.85 million in 2024. The study concluded that the USA, UK and Australia will maintain their position as the dominant host countries in 2024. However, China will enter the competitive arena since it succeeded in attracting more than 328,000 international students in 2012, an increase of 68% from 195,503 in 2007, and it set a target of 500,000 by 2015 (British Council, 2013; Universities UK, 2014a). Not only this, since China will be investing in its universities over the next 10 years, Chinese students' destination choice for HE might be affected as well, causing a reduction in the number of Chinese students seeking HE abroad. This is significant because China is now the world's biggest source of international students. However, because of the powerful position of the UK in other fast-growing markets, such as India, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, it will be less affected by a possible downturn from China than other countries. In all cases, indicators suggest the continuous growth of global mobility in the next decade which results in the emergence of a global HE market (British Council, 2013).

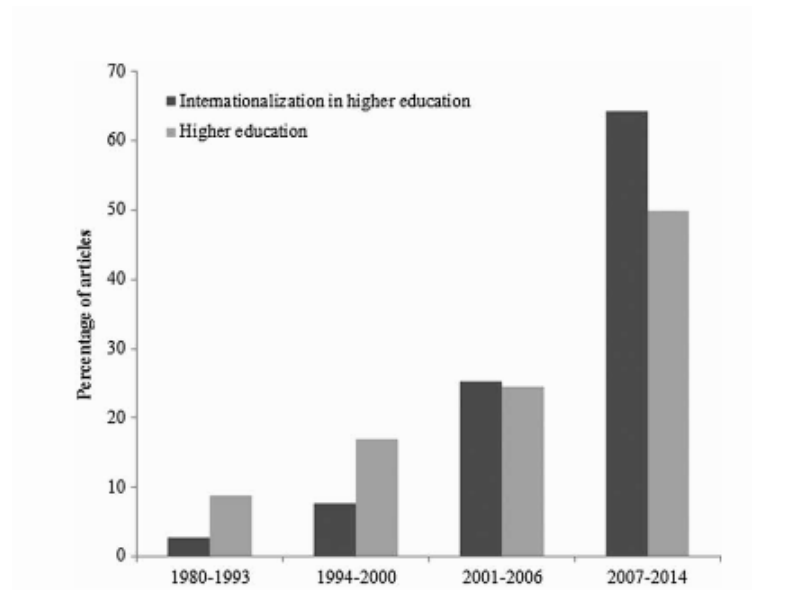
Due to the mass expansion of international student mobility, new opportunities and new sources of competition are created. This new era will bring a more diversified international student body. Indeed, the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education clarified that international students' different needs and expectations change and increase over time while their adjustment process becomes more complex (QAA, 2012). Ernst and Young's (2012)

report on the future of universities claimed that ‘global mobility’ is one of the most important drivers of change that requires transformation of the HE sector. Since ‘internationalisation’ is the universities’ strategic way of responding to the globalisation phenomenon, universities who compete internationally are internationalising everything they do and how they do it which reflects on their whole student population and achieve sustainable growth (Lunn, 2008; Maringe, 2010; Stromquist, 2007; Trahar, 2011). When European universities have been asked about their main drivers for internationalisation, improving the quality of education scored 56% and preparing students for a global world scored 45% as the most significant reasons, while financial benefits scored only 10% (Havergal, 2015). Others argued that expanding revenue at the institutional and national levels is the main motive for internationalising HE (Wadhwa and Jha, 2014). Considering all the different reasons to internationalise, educational institutions in the global market place have to be well-equipped to attract international students and win through this harsh competition.

2.3 Internationalisation of Higher Education

The term ‘internationalisation’ has become widely used in the education arena in the last decade and it can no longer be viewed as a secondary consideration. Yemini and Sagie (2015) have recently published an exploratory study where they introduced an overview of the research developments on ‘internationalisation in HE’ undertaken between 1980 and 2014. In Figure 2, the grey bars represent the percentage of publications on the subject of ‘higher education’ in broad terms and the dark bars represent the percentage of publications on the subject of ‘internationalisation in HE’ particularly over four time periods. It can be seen that the concept of ‘internationalisation in HE’ has emerged over time. It started to have almost the same amount of publications as the general field of ‘higher education’ at the beginning of the 21st century. Although the percentage of publications on both increased in the last seven years, research on ‘internationalisation in HE’ increased radically in relation to the broad topic of ‘higher education’ which reflects its significance.

Figure 2: Publications on the topic of ‘higher education’ and ‘internationalisation in HE’ from 1980 to 2013



(Yemini and Sagie, 2015, p. 94)

There is a large body of literature on the definition of internationalisation, its purposes, practices, implications and many other aspects. Its meaning differs from the perspective of different fields. In the context of HE, Arum and van de Water (1992) proposed a definition in the early 90s in order to have a common ground when talking about international education; they referred to it as “the multiple activities, programmes and services that fall within international studies, international educational exchange and technical cooperation”. This does not say that the term itself is new as it has been already used for centuries to refer to any international activity prior to this date. Knight’s (1994) study found that there were mainly four different approaches being used to describe ‘internationalisation’ as a concept in the mid-1990s, (Process approach, Activity approach, Competency approach, and Organisational approach). However, she wanted to introduce a more focused definition to avoid confusion: “Internationalisation of HE is the process of integrating an international dimension into the teaching/learning, research and service functions of a university or college. An international dimension means a perspective, activity or service which introduces or integrates an international/intercultural/global outlook into the major functions of an institution of HE” (Knight, 1994, p. 7).

Some of these definitions, including Knight’s (1994) definition, emphasise the student academic experience in terms of the teaching and research aspects as the major functions of

education. From the same perspective, Soderqvist (2002, p.29) defined it as “a change process from a national higher education institution to an international higher education institution leading to the inclusion of an international dimension in all aspects of its holistic management in order to enhance the quality of teaching and learning and to achieve the desired competencies”. And since then, the definition of ‘internationalisation’ has evolved over time while scholars have tried to change the terminologies used to best describe the term and to make it generic enough to apply to several different education systems and countries.

One of the most recent definitions is that of Yemini (2015, p.21). She defined internationalisation as “the process of encouraging integration of multicultural, multilingual, and global dimensions within the education system, with the aim of instilling in learners a sense of global citizenship”. This definition used specific terms that showed the importance of removing cultural and language barriers in an attempt to integrate international students from all over the world so that they get prepared and motivated to act as global citizens in an interdependent world. This broad understanding of internationalisation in education goes parallel with one of the current research’s focuses of embedding the student social experience within the context of the university’s international strategy, which will be discussed later in the next chapter. This does not mean there is something wrong with former definitions. Rather it means that they are complementary to each other. It also proves that internationalisation as a concept and a practice has widened over years due to the diversified student population to include the student academic and social experiences as well. Therefore, it was worth reviewing different internationalisation agendas at universities and examining what universities do to be internationalised.

2.4 Internationalisation Agendas at Universities

Today, it seems that internationalisation of HE is crucial for sustainability. Academic institutions are paying great attention to it – both as an idea and an agenda. This growing interest has translated into the active development of strategies, policies, programmes, and infrastructure that make universities places that takes seriously internationalization. There is a huge amount of literature which sheds light on the internationalisation agenda in HEIs from different perspectives. The majority of selected pieces are concerned primarily with the internationalisation practices employed in HEIs, which would happen on a home campus or abroad, as an implementation of their internationalisation plan, such as recruiting

international students (Cudmore, 2005; Mosneaga and Agergaard, 2012), internationalising the curriculum (Ardakani, Yarmohammadian, Abari and Fathi, 2011; Haigh, 2010; Luxon and Peelo, 2009; Magne, 2015), integrating international students and promoting intercultural capabilities (Crichton and Scarino, 2007; Miller, 2014; Stier, 2006), and also the trend of opening up branch campuses in other countries which are designed to attract students who do not have the privilege of travelling overseas for education (University of Oxford International Strategy Office, 2015; Havergal, 2015; Wilkins and Huisman, 2012).

From navigating the websites of a number of UK universities, it seems that not all UK universities have an internationalisation strategy. However, some universities practice a number of international activities implicitly and not as a core part of their strategy. In 2006, Koutsantoni (as cited in Warwick, & Moogan, 2013) conducted a research study using a similar methodology on a larger scale of 131 universities' websites in the UK to explore how HEIs address internationalisation strategically. He found that more than half of the universities in his study had an internationalisation strategy. However, their strategies were not supported by adapting some of the internationalisation practices such as redesigning their teaching practices and internationalising the curriculum to fulfil international students' needs (see Table 2).

Table 2: Internationalisation of HEIs in the UK

Survey of 131 Higher Education Institutions
– 52% have an internationalisation strategy
– 16 % do not mention internationalisation in their corporate plan
– 28% only refer to international student recruitment
– 28% refer to initiatives to support international students
– 8% refer to international staff recruitment
– 6% mention staff development
– 4% refer to student experience issues
– 0.5% refer to teaching and learning issues

(Koutsantoni as cited in Warwick, & Moogan, 2013, p. 104)

Koutsantoni (as cited in Warwick, & Moogan, 2013) found that most of the universities surveyed focused on international student recruitment and gave much less attention to international students' experience and their academic performance. Moreover, only 6% of the 131 universities had invested in training their staff to be prepared for this task, neglecting the fact that they are an important asset of the university. So it can be argued that these universities managed to recruit international students, develop collaborative programmes and off-shore campuses without paying enough attention to the importance of having the resources and acquiring the skills needed to deliver their international strategies and provide an international experience. This points to a significant gap between strategic planning and strategic implementation (Hénard, Diamond and Roseveare, 2012; Jiang and Carpenter, 2013).

Curtis (2013) debated the idea of the International Office being in charge of all international activities in HEIs. This was acceptable in past years as internationalisation was more associated with international student recruitment. However, the meaning of internationalisation now differs to include international partnerships and collaborations, international student and staff experience, international learning and research, and more importantly it became a descriptive term to define the university's mission, strategy, culture, and structure. Curtis (2013) argued that internationalization should be seen from a wider perspective and to widen international activities across the whole university, which does not neglect the role of the International Office in having some form of strategic oversight. Using the University of Exeter's Internationalisation Strategy 2010 as a case study, Curtis made it clear that effective communication and staff engagement are important to ensure that internationalisation is embedded within the university's strategy. The notion of the centralisation and decentralisation pointed out here is compatible with Mintzberg and Waters' (1985) main characteristics of deliberate and emergent strategies, which is one of the key discussions in this research and will be discussed in-detail in the next chapter. Still, the trend of adapting an internationalisation strategy is considered to be a new practice. Warwick and Moogan (2013) attempted to evaluate the process of implementing internationalisation strategies as perceived by staff and students in UK universities and to identify the best practices for a successful implementation. They found that each university from their small sample followed a different approach and that internationalisation had different meanings and practices to each of them although they all had common similarities in terms of the location and the national context.

Findings showed that six out of seven 'Plateglass Universities' had an internationalisation strategy. These strategies ranged from creating teaching collaborations, expanding at home and overseas, producing world class research, attracting the best scholars from around the world, and linking internationalisation initiatives to new developed key performance indicators (KPIs). The participating universities were able to formulate their international strategies; yet they failed to implement them to the same planned standard. Another important finding was that the senior managers were responsible for articulating the strategies which weaken their ability to involve staff and enhance their commitment - a top-down approach. There was poor communication of the internationalisation strategy to the academic staff who, in fact, implement the strategy at the end. This showed an obvious gap between the strategy formulation and implementation phases. It is argued that if only the senior managers articulate the strategy without consulting other staff members or at least ensuring that there is effective communication, staff commitment and performance will be affected negatively (Zeffane, Tipu, and Ryan, 2011; Giri and Kumar, 2010). Another reason is the lack of the managerial skills and knowledge needed to execute universities' international strategies (Warwick, & Moogan, 2013; Warwick, 2012).

2.5 Chapter Summary and Conclusion

Researchers have been actively investigating the internationalisation of HE as a response to increasing international student mobility and the more diversified international body it brings. Therefore, universities actively developed new policies, programmes and infrastructure in order to cope with this huge transition. A variety of internationalisation practices applied at HEIs are presented in this chapter. However, internationalisation in HEIs is not widely discussed from a strategic viewpoint in the literature. While some recent studies in this field focus on how some UK universities manage internationalisation and try to identify the gap between strategy formulation and implementation, the current research looks at international strategies in HE more deeply; it tries to determine whether universities' current international strategies are deliberately planned for or emerged over time through studying their formation process. Moreover, it attempts to look at different strategic periods in order to examine development of these strategies over years. There are different approaches in the strategic management literature when it comes to strategy formulation. The next chapter discusses some of these approaches while focusing on Mintzberg and Waters' (1985) deliberate and emergent continuum in particular.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

(Strategic Management in Universities)

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, a review of the existing literature about strategic management in UK HE and the scope of strategies in HEIs was performed to chronicle past research efforts. Section 3.2 provides a brief introduction about the possible meanings of 'strategy' used in different types of organisations. Section 3.3 examines the different approaches to formulate strategies via the lens of Mintzberg and Waters' (1985) deliberate and emergent continuum. Section 3.4 looks at the scope of universities' strategies while conducting an extensive review on the importance of the international student social experience.

3.2 How do Strategies Take Shape in Institutions?

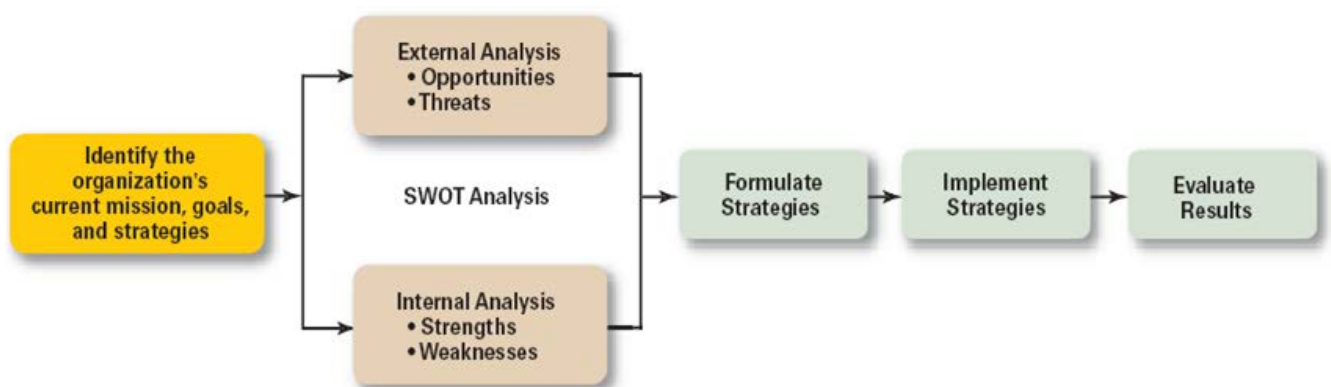
A consideration of universities' culture, capabilities, competitors, and market forces is fundamental to achieve strategic objectives successfully (Lynch, 2006). Universities' perceptions about strategic management differ and it is vital to understand the different ways of thinking about strategy. The Five Ps of the strategy model presented by Mintzberg (1987) provided an overview of the possible meanings of 'strategy'. Strategy as Plan: purposeful series of actions and guidelines set in advance to obtain certain goals, which part of it may go unrealised, if not all. This is the most common definition for strategy in most large organisations (Rumelt, 2011). Strategy as Ploy: making use of specific techniques in order to influence competitors' potential future decisions that are not in favour of the organisation; publicised only to deceive, not to be achieved (Porter, 1980). Strategy as Pattern: it is all about the consistent set of behaviours performed by members of the organisation, whether planned or not. Simon (1997) put it in plain words as "Decision, or choice, [...] is the process by which one of [the] alternatives for each moment's behaviour is selected to be carried out. The series of such decisions which determines behaviour over some stretch of time may be called a strategy". This phrase was the main stimulus behind Mintzberg's long journey of studying the strategy process and how it develops for years. Strategy as Position: proper understanding of the bigger picture of the organization in relation to the external marketplace

to be distinguished among competitors and achieve competitive edge (Porter, 2008). Strategy as Perspective: basically refers to the collective ideology of an organization and the shared culture among its members that have been emerged all the way through earlier experiences and shaped its interpretations of how they perceive the world.

This comprehensive understanding of the different meanings of strategies substitutes the old-fashioned perception of the strategy that is limited to 'planned actions', particularly in the current dynamic and uncertain HE market where so many changes take place during the typical strategic period of 'five years' at most of the universities. Mintzberg's different definitions of strategy can overlap as some may achieve a desired 'position' through a plan or a ploy. Also a set of successful patterns can craft a deliberate plan. However, they all balance the process of setting a successful strategy since each of them sheds light on a different viewpoint that should be considered (Mintzberg, Quinn and James, 1988).

Strategic management is a broader term than strategy; it is a continuous process that helps managers to formulate and implement an organisational strategy. Different authors developed different models to explain the steps involved in this process and they all have four main phases in common regardless of naming them differently; strategic analysis, strategy formulation, strategy implementation and strategy evaluation (David, 2009; Thompson and Martin, 2010; Rothaermel, 2012). Robbins and Coulter's (2010) model can be used to explain this briefly (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: The strategic management process



(Robbins and Coulter, 2010, p. 273)

Identify the organisation's current mission, goals, and strategies: the starting point involves the clarification of what the company is all about, what the business offers in terms of products and services, what the company wants to achieve and the future of its existence.

SWOT Analysis: This step starts with an assessment of the company's current position in the market and an analysis of the internal and external factors that affect the organization's performance and competitive situation. Internal scanning includes defining the company's strengths and weaknesses through assessing its tangible and intangible resources, core competencies and activities in order to best use its strengths and strive to improve its weaknesses. External environmental scanning includes identifying the environmental opportunities and threats through studying the market, competitors, economy, technological developments, legal requirements, political events, and sociocultural changes in order to overcome its threats and exploit its opportunities.

Formulate strategy: after conducting the internal and external scanning, managers decide on the best course of actions and begin forming appropriate strategies to accomplish organisational objectives by matching organizational strengths and weaknesses with environmental opportunities and threats.

Implement strategy: this step aims to put the formulated strategy into action. It requires managing the organisation's activities, allocating its resources strategically, and making the required changes in the organisational structure to fit the new strategy. To ensure an effective implementation of the strategy, communicating the strategy among different levels of the organisation is essential.

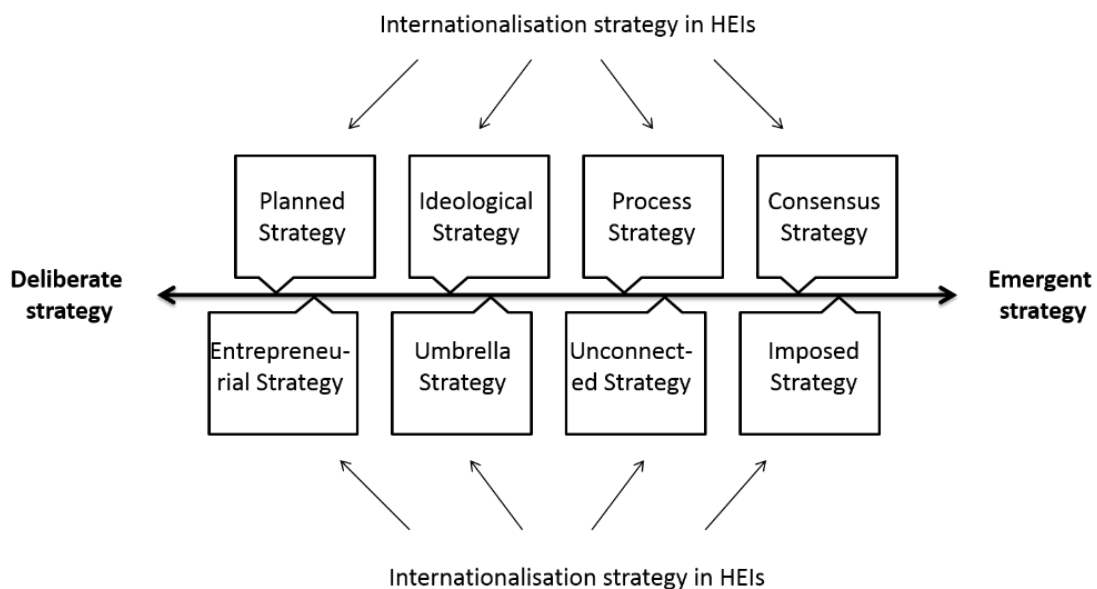
Evaluate results: this is the final step of the strategic management process in which managers measure the effectiveness of the strategy to meet the organisational objectives and whether the strategy was implemented as intended or not. This helps managers to identify what is working and what is not and also helps them to make corrective adjustments when the strategy is not producing the desired outcomes.

Although this model can be very effective, the arrows indicate only a one way process which is not applicable in the current dynamic environment. In reality, managers do not necessarily have to complete the process and start it all over again from the beginning if some conditions have changed. Instead, they might need to move back and forth through the steps and make necessary alterations (Vasile, Popescu, Iancu and Popescu, 2014). Moreover, rather than inserting the evaluation function into a particular phase, it is suggested to consider it as an on-going exercise throughout the whole process in order to react properly to any unforeseeable internal or external factors which will save time, money, and effort (Chaneta, 2007).

3.3 Deliberate and Emergent Strategies

Mintzberg and Waters' (1985) deliberate/emergent continuum provides another dimension of how strategies are formulated in organisations and add richness to the strategic management field through looking at the wider picture instead of taking only one concept too seriously. They claimed that real-world strategies lie altogether on a continuum starting with the 'Planned Strategies' which belong to the extreme deliberate pole and ending with the 'Imposed Strategies' which belong to the extreme emergent pole. Other strategies which fall in-between these two opposing extremes differ in their degree of blending the deliberate and emergent perspectives together (Mintzberg and Waters, 1985), as illustrated in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Mintzberg and Waters' deliberate-emergent strategies continuum



Developed from (Mintzberg and Waters, 1985)

Strategy was, or still is, often viewed as a 'plan' of action designed to achieve a long-term goal and it was limited to intended behaviours, analytical process and action plans which represent the typical 'design school'; from the name itself, 'designed' to achieve (Mintzberg, 1990). It advocates that strategy should be fully formulated prior to the execution phase; that is, consciously processed and deliberately controlled by the universities' senior management team. Thus, deliberate strategies are the result of analysing and assessing internal and external circumstances (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threads), taking into

consideration the organisation's values and its corporate social responsibility towards the community. Afterwards, all approaching strategies are evaluated precisely in order to decide on which is the best-fit to be implemented. Applying this to the deliberate strategies in HEIs, it suggests that senior managers would have proper international strategies which define all the key international concerns, analyse where they are now and where they want to be in the future, identify universities' objectives and articulate action plans on how to implement them; everything is intended and well planned for in advance.

Although this school had a profound contribution to the field, it may not be sufficient in today's environment where the large diversified number of international students enrolled in UK HEIs is imposing changeable demands, which requires an acceptable level of flexibility and cannot be managed easily by fixed plans. It was argued that this school neglects the views, thoughts, and opinions of all other members of the organisation and can be likened to a 'one-man-show' where the top management is the only creative thinker whereas the staff are only doing what they are told. Another critique was that it assumes definite certainty where everything is predictable and there is no room for emergent strategies. Every single aspect of these strategies are articulated explicitly, considering the environment's one-off minor role as an input to the strategy formulation process when assessing the external forces (Mintzberg, Ahlstrand, and Lampel, 1998). Furthermore, it was claimed that it impedes the notion of strategic learning, resists the willingness to change, blocks out the communication channels with the external environment that may offer forthcoming opportunities, and stifles innovation (Johnston and Bate, 2013).

This conventional route has started to change slowly as a result of the shift to the new economy; taking into account the major new trends in technology, political pressures, and social developments towards more flexible, shared, and emergent strategies. Unlike deliberate strategies, emergent strategies are considered as actions that emerged within an organisation to adapt to the turbulent environmental imposed patterns. The absence of intentions is its main feature, that is, a pattern of unplanned actions. It is seen as responses to the unpredicted events within business units which requires a high level of flexibility. For these action to be a 'strategy', actions have to be consistent over time (Mintzberg and Waters, 1985; Mintzberg, 1994; Brown and Eisenhardt, 1998; Bodwell and Chermack, 2010). Uncertainty is explicitly present in that scene. The total absence of intentions represents the extreme case of the emergent strategy; however, its degree varies amongst different emergent

schools of thought. According to Mintzberg and Waters (1985), such emergent strategy enables management to be proactive in order to respond to an evolving reality which improves universities' competitive responsiveness. In addition, empirical data declared that the traditional planned strategies do not enhance innovation management whereas the improvised strategies stimulate creativity, innovation, and competency (Johnston and Bate, 2013; Song, et al., 2011).

In contrast to the traditional top-down hierarchy followed in making decisions, emergent strategies evolve by those who are working in the very bottom line of an organisation as they have direct contact with customers and are the closest to consumers' taste (McKeown, 2012), which reflects what the market actually needs and urges to be Customer-centric not Company-centric (Watson and Harris, 1999; Johnston and Bate, 2013). In that case top managers define the general behavioural guidelines and boundaries, and the emergent strategies usually evolve within these boundaries. This level of autonomy empowers staff as they feel they take part in decisions that affect the company's future and guarantees their commitment (Giri and Kumar, 2010). It is also labelled as 'deliberately emergent' in the sense that the central leadership creates conditions which allow strategies to emerge (Mintzberg and Waters, 1985).

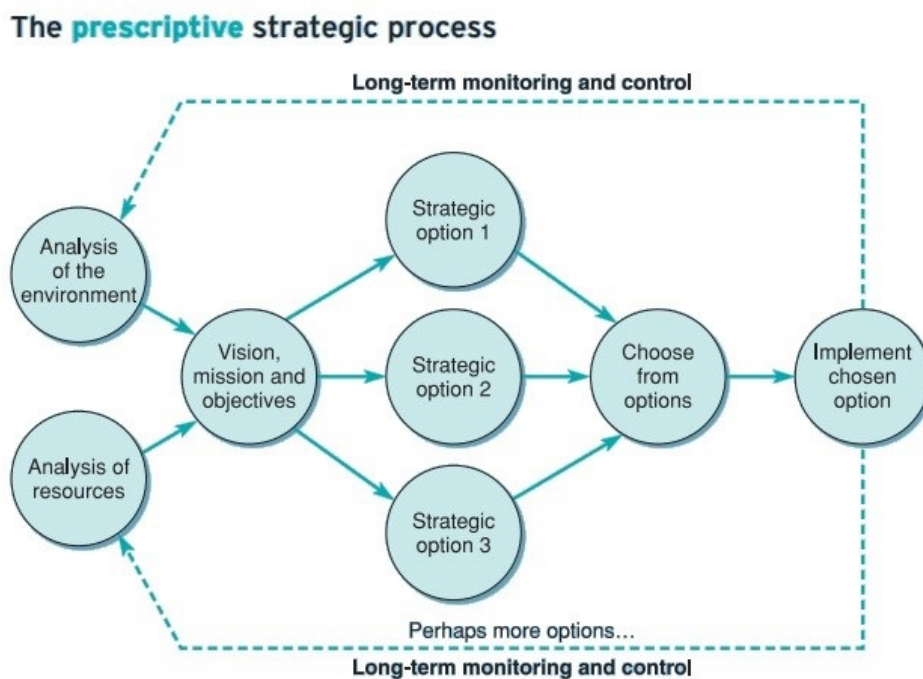
Considering this position, the first line staff who had a direct contact with international students would have a say in shaping the international strategy at the university in collaboration with the top management team; as they, unintentionally, emerge certain actions into the day-to-day activities to improve their experience on campus. The consistency of these actions makes it a sort of an emergent strategy. This dominates the mind-set of the 'learning organisation' where staff at all different organisational levels are constantly learning and enriching their capabilities to accomplish the desired goals.

Some may claim that this emergent view could be applied to important things at the strategic level but not to the details at the tactical levels. However, sometimes it is important to handle the details well and let strategies emerge for themselves. Taking the international events which are organised by international students at UK universities as an example; students join such events throughout the academic year to share their cultural performances, traditional cuisines, and national costumes as a way to represent their country, express their culture proudly and feel at home. This would satisfy them socially and help them to outperform academically. This achieves the socio-academic integration which is a strategic objective that

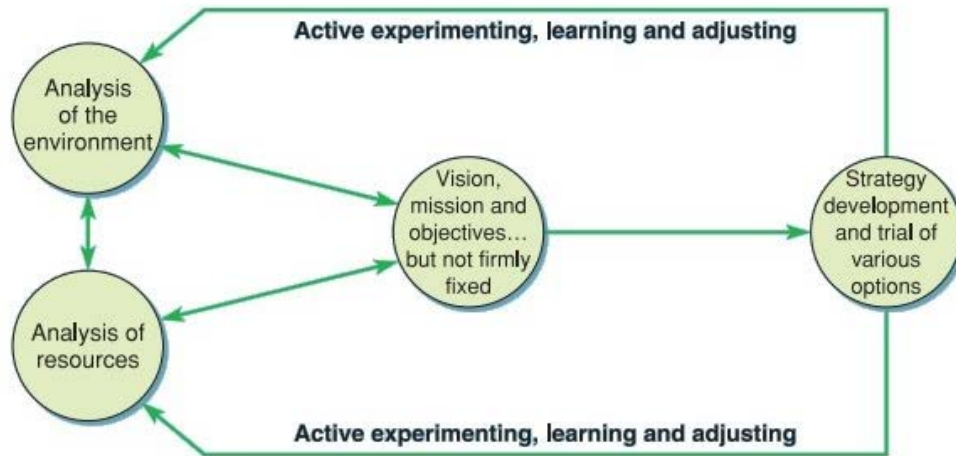
the top management team is dedicated to accomplish as what seems tactical today may prove strategic tomorrow (Mintzberg, 1987).

Despite the apparent effectiveness of the emergent strategy, Mintzberg and Waters (1985) argued that an extreme emergent strategy that lacks control and structure is not recommended; at best, it serves as a complementary part of deliberate strategy but it cannot offer a complete alternative to it. Hence, the strategic management literature identifies two contrasting approaches to strategy formulation. Lynch (2006) provided a useful illustration to these two approaches, as illustrated in Figure 5.

Figure 5: The prescriptive and emergent strategic processes



The emergent strategic process



(Lynch, 2006, p.2)

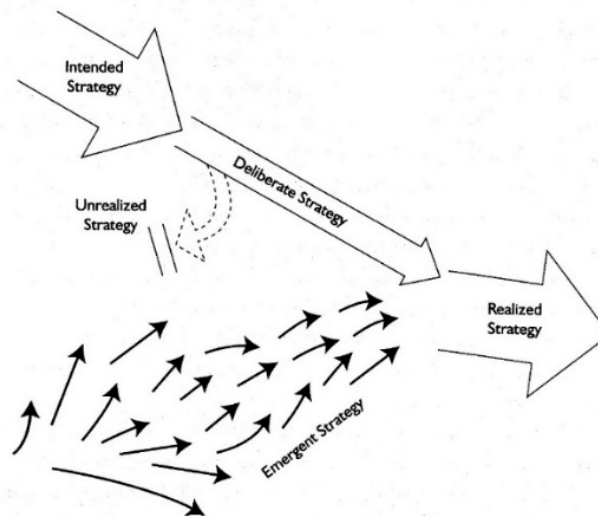
The prescriptive strategic process in this diagram refers to the traditional deliberate strategy in its simplest way. Whereas the emergent strategic process demonstrates a balance of relying basically on a deliberate strategy where the organisational vision, mission and goals are explicitly pronounced and shared among members at all organisational levels. However, it is not strictly fixed as it can be adjusted flexibly with respect to the organisational active experimenting and continuous learning process. The emergent strategy view is not about having contingency strategy or scenario planning just in case (Watson and Harris, 1999; Bodwell and Chermack, 2010); instead, it is about letting patterns emerge on their own to craft deliberate strategy over time.

Lynch's (2006) second approach to emergent strategy (see Figure 5) seems to support Mintzberg and Waters' (1985) view as they argue that it is rarely to find a pure deliberate (no learning) or a pure emergent strategy (no control). Whilst UK HEIs, like many large public sector organisations, lean towards the deliberate pole, other authors attributed the success of leading universities to the ability of being flexible and entrepreneurial (Gibb, et al., 2012). However, the gap between strategy formulation and implementation is common at all organisations, so it also appears to be a problem in UK universities (Rumelt, 2011). Mintzberg and Waters' (1985) highlighted that there is often a gap between the company's realised strategy and its original intended strategy throughout the implementation process as people interpret things differently.

Figure 6 demonstrates the output of their research where:

- a) Realised strategies that were intended in advance are called deliberate strategies
- b) Realised strategies that were a result of non-intended pattern in a stream of actions are called emergent strategies
- c) Unrealised plans that were intended are called unrealised strategies

Figure 6: Forms of strategies



(Mintzberg, 1987, p. 14)

This model emphasizes Mintzberg's (1987) principle of strategies as both patterns from the past and plans for the future. The significance of blending the deliberate strategy and emergent strategy together lies in reaching the fine line between the two extremes. It is about achieving the balance between providing a central goals-direction along with a sense of flexibility and responsiveness for adaptation, being open to effective strategic learning while avoiding chaos and being out of control, and having a clear vision, yet, giving room for the details to be emerged (Andrews, 1980; Mintzberg, Ahlstrand and Lampel, 1998; Downs, Durant and Carr, 2003). Bodwell and Chermack (2010) referred this to the 'organisational ambidexterity'; meaning that the organisation has the ability to make use of opposites adequately instead of making trade-offs. On top of that, the feedback loop associated with the 'deliberate and emergent strategies' offers another learning source for managers as they learn what works the best from the previous experiences of their organisations since realised strategies tend to be

the future deliberate strategies as time goes by; not only this, managers benefit from unrealised strategies also as they learn what does not work and what needs modifications (Mintzberg and Waters, 1985).

3.4 Scope of Strategies at Universities

Strategic management is a leading mechanism to manage change at universities and maintain sustainable advantage (Rothaermel, 2012). However, it is found that researchers tend to focus their attention on strategic management of perceived core functions including the academic experience, finance, resource allocation, and research funding (Shattock, 2000; Tali and Karen, 2003; Ruben, 2010; Gordon and Fischer, 2011; Bassa and Ranganathan, 2013; Donche, et al., 2013; Gordon, 2013; Ensign and Woods, 2014).

Furthermore, while having a look at the strategic plans of some influential bodies that have a strong impact on the HE landscape in the UK, e.g. Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), Higher Education Academy (HEA), and Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA), it was found that their key objectives, more or less, revolve around learning and teaching, fair access and social justice, the student educational experience, funding, research, academic programmes, employability skills, and knowledge exchange (HEFCE, (n.d.); HEA, (n.d.); QAA, (n.d.)).

Although researchers already emphasised the importance of an international student social experience, its relationship with universities' strategies is less clear. Research conducted in 37 UK universities has identified five types of internationalisation strategy (Maringe, 2010); however, none of them consider the international social experience of students (see Table 3).

Table 3: Range and importance of university internationalisation strategies

<i>Internationalization strategy</i>	<i>Rank</i>	<i>Type of university</i>
Recruitment of international students	1	All but especially in newer universities, former polytechnic and privately funded institutions
Student and staff exchange programmes	2	All but especially in the older universities
Development of international partnerships for teaching, including joint programmes, offshore teaching and learning	3	All but especially in the newer universities
Development of international collaborative partnerships for research, entrepreneurship and development	4	All but especially in the older universities
Curriculum internationalization, ranging from minor changes in content to fundamental redesign of objectives, teaching methods and assessment	5	All, but especially in newer universities

(Maringe, 2010, p25)

It is critical to address the cultural diversity on campuses due to increasing global student mobility as mentioned earlier. However, when examining international students' social lives, several studies found that many international students suffer from homesickness, difficulties in building new social networks, adaptation and communication problems (Khawaja and Stallman, 2011; Smith and Khawaja, 2011; Yu, et al., 2014); with higher scores for isolation and a need for greater social support than their home colleagues. Emerging research relates this to cultural distance, lack of English Language proficiency and an academic performance deficit which act as barriers preventing international students from joining social activities on campus and making friends from different nationalities (Sawir, et al., 2012; Ramachandran, 2011; Smith and Khawaja, 2011). Being unsatisfied socially can produce academic stress because scholars who cross national borders need strong social connections to support their studying (Li, Chen and Duanmu, 2010; Mushtaq and Khan, 2012). Conversely, failure to attain high academic performance drives students to emphasise their academic goals and spend less time on socialising which negatively affects their social satisfaction and leads to the same

issues associated with an unbalanced life. So perhaps the literature undervalues the importance of the international student social experience being embedded within the strategic management processes in HE and there is a substantial gap in the scholarly understanding of the overall strategic priorities of HEIs.

Wadhwa and Jha (2014) claimed that internationalisation should be seen as a holistic approach and to consider all different aspects such as: international student recruitment, international partnerships, international curriculum, global employability and international student experience, not only the academic experience, but the social experience on-and-off campus as well. The Council for International Education in association with the British Council, Universities UK, and the Standing Conference of Principals, the first major survey on the experiences of overseas students in UK HE was conducted (UKCOSA, 2004). 89 per cent of international students who were studying in the UK and participated in this survey said that they were 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with their overall study experience and that they were satisfied with the academic experience in relation to the quality of teaching and academic facilities. However, it was highlighted that international students also give great attention to their socio-cultural experiences during their study in UK HE and that they are concerned about a lack of social integration with UK and other international students. The published report out of this survey suggested that universities could do more to enhance the international student social experience through promoting cultural diversity via social events and trips, facilitating language classes to help improve cross-cultural communication and also provide guidance in cultural sensitivity, respecting diversity and understanding of other cultures (UKCOSA, 2004). In an attempt to explore in what sense HE is internationalising, Healey (2008, p. 335) stated that "in the context of universities, internationalisation is most closely associated with the teaching function of universities and the move from local production to satisfy local consumers to distributed multinational production to satisfy a global consumer base". However, since the aim of internationalising universities is to really satisfy international students as global consumers who proved to be concerned about their social experience, the view should be broadened to include the teaching function and social integration as well. While the literature explores various mechanisms to internationalise HE and to 'win hearts and minds', there is insufficient consideration of the international student social experience, particularly in relation to institutional strategy.

3.5 Chapter Summary and Conclusion

This chapter has provided an extensive background about the different types of organisational strategies and identified the key characteristics of each type, ranging from deliberate strategies to emergent strategies. In addition to the traditional view of strategy as a plan of actions that is fully formulated prior to the execution phase, some researchers argue that emergent strategies might be more effective due to the rapidly changing environment. However, these two directions have been identified as opposing extremes where real life strategies lie in between and differ in their degrees of blending both. In the literature, there is no clear picture about how senior managers formulate their international strategies at universities nor the process they go through. However, the 'strategic management process', in general, is widely discussed. Looking at the scope of strategies in HEIs, it was found that researchers addressed several issues relating to the traditional education aspects such as teaching, research, employability and funding. Although research in HE policy has already shed light on the importance of an international student social experience, its position at the HE strategic level remains less clear. Thus, this research attempts to investigate how international strategies are being formed in UK HEIs, where they lie on Mintzberg's deliberate/emergent continuum and the extent to which the international student social experience is embedded within the context of strategic management in HE. In the next chapter, the methodology applied in this research in order to achieve these objectives is explained in detail.

Chapter 4: Research Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the research methods which were used to investigate the research questions which were outlined in chapter 1. It outlines and justifies the research philosophical position and design. It also sheds light on the ontological, epistemological, and methodological perspectives of the study. The research questions shape the whole research map.

4.2 Research Design

Developing a research design before commencing with data collection and analysis is of considerable importance and it determines the success or failure of the research. It is a blueprint of how to conduct the study and it provides logical arrangements to guide the researcher through the data collection and analysis phases which helps to draw the conclusions (Creswell, 2014). It should answer the questions of how, when and where to collect and analyse data and also determine how much structure and flexibility the researcher imposes on the study. This study focuses on the internationalisation strategy of HEIs and the international student social experience as a strategic priority. Therefore, the research design was qualitative, exploratory-descriptive and contextual.

4.2.1 Qualitative Research

Qualitative research focuses on discovering perceptions and understanding experiences. From the qualitative aspect, the goal of research is to “better understand human behaviour and experience...grasp the processes by which people construct meaning and to describe what those meanings are” (Bogdan and Biklen, 1998:38). The rationale for choosing this approach was to explore the international strategy’s formation process at universities and investigate the importance of an international student social experience. Although some scholars, including Creswell (1994), have argued that using a combination of quantitative and qualitative techniques is an advantage, Teddlie and Yu (2007) believe that choosing the right methodology depends largely on the research topic and the type of research question. Indeed, a strong reason for relying primarily on qualitative methods was that in spite of the

preciseness and significance of quantitative methods, some of them are not true and significant humanly (Reason and Rowan , 1981).

In fact, a qualitative approach supported the current research in different ways; one privilege was that a variety of methods were used as sources of evidence (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2006) e.g. in-depth interviews and document review, which was adequate to best understand the research problem. In addition, it reflected all the detailed aspects of the research topic and added more richness and depth into the data collection and analysis than quantitative research methods could do (Nicholls, 2011). Moreover, quantitative methods could not be used in this research as there were no theoretical hypotheses to be tested, especially there is no significant scholarly attention paid to the topic beforehand. There is little literature on the subject which required detailed data to interpret different meanings and to contribute to the current body of knowledge.

4.2.2 Exploratory-Descriptive Research

Qualitative research is exploratory in nature; according to Creswell (2014), explorative studies are best undertaken when the research subject is considered as new. Using this approach in the study was especially useful because the concept of internationalisation strategy in HEIs is a little-understood phenomenon and the exploratory research helped to investigate and understand its full nature. Although research has been conducted on internationalisation in HE as detailed in the literature chapter, little is known about internationalisation in a strategic context. Bean (2011) stated that theoretical research problems deal with “we don’t know why,” descriptive research problems deal with “we don’t know what,” and practical research problems deal with “we don’t know how”. Descriptive research was necessary in order to provide an accurate portrayal of the characteristics of the internationalisation strategy in the selected universities, as well as to produce descriptive data about the strategy formation process and the international student experience in the participants’ own spoken words. Because the research dealt with ‘what’ questions, investigating all aspects of the universities’ internationalisation strategies was crucial. Thus, an exploratory-descriptive research was employed.

4.2.3 Contextual Research

The constructivism view assumes that people construct meanings of things from their engagement with the world and that their meanings are influenced by their cultures, experiences and social interactions. Therefore, studying the context or setting of the participants is highly considered by qualitative researchers. Holloway and Wheeler (2002:34) explained that context includes the “environment and conditions in which the study takes place as well as the culture of the participants and location”.

The participants in this study are senior staff at the selected universities who are involved in the strategic management process and who are in charge of implementing the international strategy. The study had different settings as the interviews were conducted in four different universities in the UK (a brief description of each university is provided in chapter five). Time was also an important element of the research as some of the interview questions and the supplementary questions were concerned with universities’ previous strategies. Therefore, the data collected in this research could not be analysed outside their context and time.

4.3 Research Paradigms

The term paradigm was firstly mentioned in “The structure of Scientific Revolutions” book by Thomas Kuhn in 1962. It is a core issue that researchers work within explicitly or implicitly. In brief, it is a pattern, perspective, or set of ideas that reflect researchers’ beliefs and assumptions about the nature of reality which help us understand phenomena (Creswell, 1994).

These paradigms are broken down into three aspects: ontology - questions about what is real and the nature of this reality; epistemology - the study of knowledge and what it reveals about the relationship between reality and the researcher; and methodology- the techniques used by the researcher to gain that knowledge and discover that reality (Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Crotty, 1998). The assumptions of the four main paradigms are presented in the following table by Guba and Lincoln (1994), based on the ontological, epistemological, and methodological positions (see Table 4). The right-hand column shows the rationale of the present study with regard to these assumptions.

Table 4: The assumptions of the four research paradigms

Element	Paradigm				The present study
	Positivism	Constructivism	Critical theory	Realism	
Ontology	Reality is real and apprehensible	Multiple local and specific “constructed” realities	“Virtual” reality shaped by social, economic, ethnic, political, cultural, and gender values, crystallised over time	Reality is “real” but only imperfectly and probabilistically apprehensible and so triangulation from many sources is required to try to know it	<p>Searching for subjective meanings as multiple truths affected by different experiences and social interactions, more than one reality considered correct</p> <p>The researcher is a passionate participant during the interviews to acquire in-depth qualitative data and during data-analysis to interpret findings</p> <p>An inductive reasoning is followed where there is no prior hypotheses before conducting the study, qualitative techniques applies to better serve the research objectives</p>
Epistemology	Findings true – researcher is objective by viewing reality through a “one-way mirror”	Created findings – researcher is a “passionate participant” within the world being investigated	Value mediated findings – researcher is a “transformative intellectual” who changes the social world within which participants live	Findings probably true – researcher is value-aware and needs to triangulate any perceptions he or she is collecting	
Common methodologies	Mostly concerns with a testing of theory. Thus mainly quantitative methods such as: survey, experiments, and verification of hypotheses	In-depth unstructured interviews, participant observation, action research, and grounded theory research	Action research and participant observation	Mainly qualitative methods such as case studies and convergent interviews	

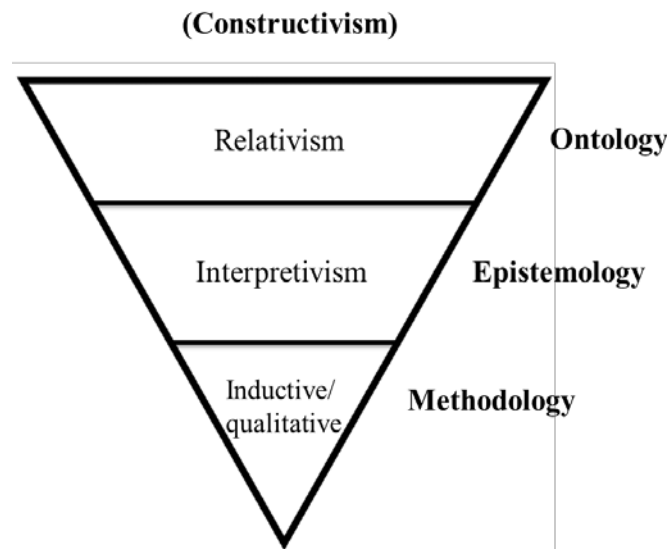
Note: Essentially, ontology is “reality”, epistemology is the relationship between that reality and the researcher and methodology is the technique used by the researcher to discover that reality
Source: Based on Perry *et al.* (1999), which itself was based on Guba and Lincoln (1994) from which the quotations come

Table I.
Four scientific paradigms

Adapted from (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, p. 108)

The intent of the study was to explore the formation process of the internationalisation strategy at UK HEIs via the application of Mintzberg and Waters’ (1985) deliberate/emergent strategies, as well as to investigate the international student social experience as a strategic priority. From the orientation of the study as shown in the above figure; noticeably, this study adopted the constructivism paradigm which aims to generate meanings from the data collected in the field. This paradigm seeks to understand the social world subjectively. Figure 7 provides a summary of this research position and illustrates its philosophical views.

Figure 7: Research paradigm



The ontological view (relativism) yield to subjectivity where there is no single reality, instead, one incident could be interpreted relatively based on individual perspectives (Erickson 1986; Schwandt, 1994). The epistemological view (interpretivism) of this research advocates that individuals (international students, operational staff, and senior strategic managers) interpret/construct the meaning of reality through interactions with the social environment (Schwandt, 1994; Guba and Lincoln, 1994). It advocates that knowledge is best gained through interactions, while respecting individual differences and understanding the meanings of multiple realities, and to do so, the researcher needed to be interactive through interviews and data analysis, could not be distant from the subject of investigation.

Methodologically, this paradigm utilized an inductive form of logic to explore the subject area from the participants' perspectives due to the lack of existing theory regarding the internationalisation strategy at HEIs as explained in the literature review chapters. Thus, the researcher constructed theories or explanations from the data collected. This is consistent with Strauss and Corbin's (1998) description: "The researcher begins with an area of study and allows the theory to emerge from the data". Crotty (1998) clarified that these key features mentioned above inform the type of research approach applied. Hence, the research followed a qualitative approach since the research's main goal was to gather detailed data to explore how HEIs internationalise their overall strategies to respond to the globalisation phenomenon and to better understand international students' opinions, feelings, and ways of thinking; which all relates to human experience, rather than statistics and numbers.

4.4 Grounded Theory Methodology

To conduct qualitative research, Creswell (2003) listed five strategies of inquiry: narratives, phenomenological studies, grounded theory studies, ethnographies, and case studies. In order to generate grounded explanations and theoretical insights for a previously little studied area, the Grounded Theory was considered appropriate for this work (Crooks 2001).

Glaser and Strauss (1967) introduced the concept of GT in their influential book 'The Discovery of Grounded Theory' which had a major effect upon the research world which had been dominated by quantitative research methods. Glaser and Strauss (1967) defined GT as 'the discovery of theory from data systematically obtained from social research'. This methodology advocates creating new theory that aims to explain a specific phenomenon rather than testing existing theories to generalise the findings. It suggests employing a 'constant comparative analysis' to allow the 'emergence' of the new theory grounded in the data, which replaces the theoretical hypotheses in the deductive approach (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). The notion of whether to conduct a literature review prior to the data collection phase is still debatable (McGhee, et al., 2007; Walls, et al., 2010; Dunne, 2011).

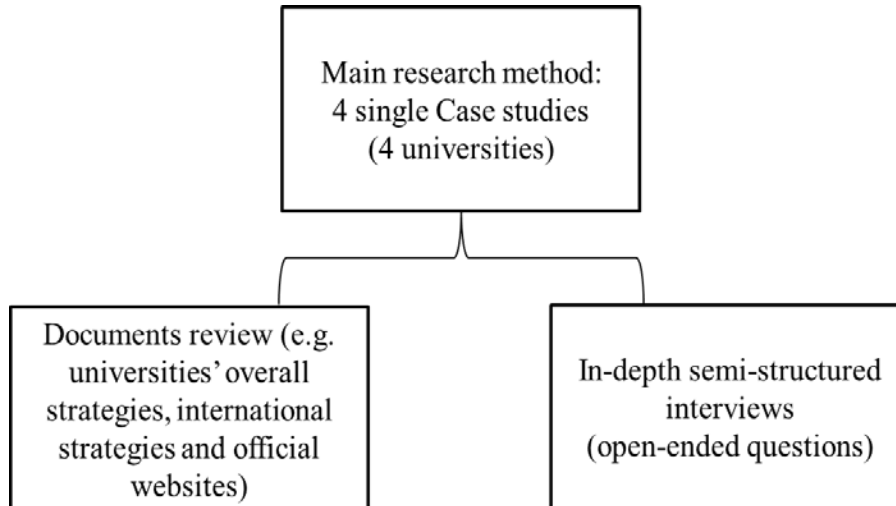
The Classic Grounded Theory (CGT) by Glaser (1992) allowed the literature to be used as additional data; he specified that researchers have to avoid reviewing any of the literature about the research subject being investigated before the theory emerged and to start collecting data without any precise research questions or research problem in mind. By contrast, Strauss and Corbin (1998) took a more liberal position and refined the concept; they refer to the important role of the literature to be used in the early stages of the research study especially for novice researchers to alter their theoretical sensitivity. However, Glaser (1992) criticized the Straussian approach claiming that it directs the researcher and leads to the 'forcing' of data which contaminate the whole purpose of establishing the GT methodology.

In this study, the Straussian approach of reviewing the literature before the research study is begun was employed without betraying the common cause of the CGT. A broad literature about strategic management and internationalisation in HE was reviewed which shaped an interest about the subject area; however, no particular questions were drawn and there were no hypotheses to be tested before the data collection phase. Moreover, the main focus of the research was developed during the different research phases as it will be detailed in section 4.4.1 (data collection) and section 4.7 (data analysis).

4.4.1 Data Collection Methods

The main data collection method used four single case studies along with in-depth semi-structured interviews and document review (see Figure 8).

Figure 8: Research methods



4.4.1.1 Case Study

Yin (1994, p.13) defined a case study as “an empirical inquiry that: investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context, especially when he boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident”. Thus, the researcher investigated the evolving internationalisation phenomenon in its real context by going to the four universities’ campuses, conducting the interviews with one senior staff member at each university who is in charge of setting and implementing the internationalisation strategy and collecting some important documents. There is a list of answers to the question of ‘what would be the distinctive advantages of doing a case study, compared to other methods?’ which justifies why the case study method was selected.

First of all, using a case study provided a holistic understanding and a holistic analysis of the full phenomenon in its natural setting without manipulation or changing any of the variables, unlike the statistical approaches (Feagin, et al., 1991); which is very important to explore the internationalisation strategy at different universities and understand how it is articulated. A unique strength of case study research is that a variety of evidence from different sources can be used, such as interviews and document review, which provide different kinds of insights

so that the internationalisation strategy was well explored from a variety of lenses (Yin, 2009).

The use of a case study helps to get detailed and accurate data as it captures the complexity of reality (Denscombe, 2007), which enriches data validity and reliability (Yin, 2009). It has been argued that a case study lacks objectivity and could be easily biased (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Although qualitative research methods typically depend on the researcher's interpretations, a GT data collection and data analysis approaches can prevent this from happening (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). However, the researcher's interpretations give meaning to the research data. Fetterman (2010, p. 1) noted that the researcher needs "an open mind, not an empty head".

Selecting the cases was vital and depended primarily on the purpose of the research, research questions and the theoretical framework (Baxter and Jack, 2008). Miles and Huberman (1994) defined the case as, "a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context. The case is, in effect, your unit of analysis". This research aimed to analyse the universities' internationalisation strategy in UK HE and the international student experiences as a strategic priority. Therefore, a small number of universities in the UK were selected as the cases for this research. The universities' and interviewees' names remained anonymous to protect the respondents' confidentiality.

There are some other important factors affected the selection decision of cases including: accessibility; as the research questions were related to some strategic information, interviewees needed to be from the top level management to collect prompt and accurate data. Having a good relationship with senior staff in these universities made the selection process easier. Time was another important element; due to the time constraint, only four universities were selected to collect data from (Rowley, 2002).

4.4.1.2 In-depth Interviews

As mentioned earlier, interviews were the main sources of data in this research. "The qualitative research interview is a construction site for knowledge. An interview is literally an interview, an inter-change of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest" (Kvale, 1996). In seeking to understand the international strategic practices at the selected universities, face-to-face semi structured interviews were conducted with one member of senior staff who is in charge of internationalisation at each university. The

purpose was to gain an insight into the perceptions of the universities' staff with regard to the internationalisation, strategic priorities and international student social experience. This was done by sending emails to selected possible respondents and providing them with an explanatory statement contains a brief about the researcher and the research topic as well as the researcher's contact details to arrange for the interviews at their convenience (see Appendix 1). Only those who showed interest in taking part in the study were interviewed. During the interviews, an informed consent form was provided to the participants to be signed by them asking about their willingness to participate in the research, share their experiences and get their permission to be audio taped (see Appendix 2). It was made clear that their participation was entirely voluntary and that they had the right to withdraw themselves from the research at any time without explanation. Each interview lasted approximately two hours and it followed a general framework of questions (see Appendix 3). Although the interviews were very time-consuming to conduct and analyse, they provided rich insights that would not be collected from large survey samples.

4.4.1.3 Document Review

Document review were applied alongside the interviews in order to re-analyse the existing data which is as valuable for generating theory as the other sources, unlike some of the social science researchers believe (Mogalakwe, 2006). As part of the investigation, decisive documents such as: universities' current corporate strategies and internationalisation strategies were carefully reviewed to generate empirical data for the study. Nevertheless, all documents were subject to Scott's (1990) quality control criteria for handling documentary sources: authenticity, credibility, representativeness and meaning; all documents were genuine as they were collected from the interviewees personally during the interviews or downloaded from the universities' official websites. They clearly represented the actual plans that were being employed at the universities.

4.4.2 Data Collection Procedures

To design interview questions (see Appendix 3), the research objectives needed to be translated into a series of questions that reflected the research's main variables (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000). However, because a Grounded Theory Methodology (GTM) was applied and there were no specific variables to be measured, a series of general exploratory questions was designed. The questions were guided by Charmaz's (2006)

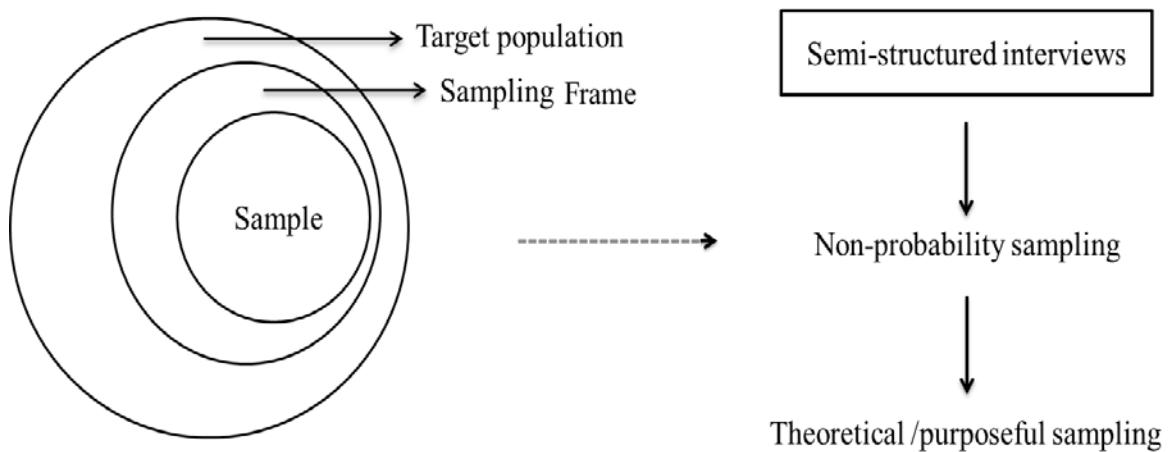
approach to GTM of how to prepare interview questions. For example the question 'does only the senior management team formulate the university's strategy?' was changed to 'How does the University's strategy form and who is involved in the strategic management process?'. The questions were formed in an open-ended format to give space to the participants so they could talk about the subject area freely. Questions were asked in a non-directive manner to let the respondents talk about what was of importance to them in a given context and to avoid directing their answers, which enhanced research reliability.

To ensure that the questions were formulated using a simple language and familiar terminologies for clarity and ease of understanding, the researcher pre-tested the interview questions on six researchers from different disciplines. As a result, some of the questions were modified before conducting the actual interviews. The selected participants were contacted to schedule a convenient time for conducting the interviews. To ensure validity and reliability, consistency was maintained through being the only interviewer during the four interviews, showing similar personal attributes, e.g. kindness and support, and conducting the interviews under comfortable conditions (respondents' offices at the universities). As the data collection and data analysis proceeded simultaneously in a grounded theory research, the initial findings from the first interview altered the questions of the subsequent interviews.

4.5 Study Population and Sampling

As indicated in Figure 9, the target population is the population of interest or the entire group that the research gathers and analyses data about in order to draw conclusions at the end. In this research, the target population included all the HEIs around the globe. The sampling frame is the population that can be accessed; in other terms, all the universities in the UK in particular, whereas the sample is a group of people who have been selected to represent the larger population in order to save time, money, and effort (Henry, 1990). These were four universities which were selected as cases based on their confirmed willingness to be part of the study. This means that in effect the sample was self-selecting.

Figure 9: Research sample



Marshall (1996) declared that non-probability sampling, rather than random sampling, is more appropriate for qualitative studies as it best serves the research aims and characteristics. Therefore, a non-probability sampling technique was applied for conducting the interviews as shown in the figure. Theoretical sampling, which is a significant element associated with the GTM, was used to determine the participants of the study. It helped to select participants who are particularly knowledgeable of the issues under investigation to be able to answer to the research specific questions (Schutt, 2006). Interviewees were selected based on their degree of involvement and influence on the universities' international strategies so as to provide valuable information about the strategy and the future direction, in other words, purposeful sampling (Teddlie and Yu, 2007). One person from each university was chosen to participate.

Some researchers argued that the findings of a particular small number of cases cannot be generalised; however, case study generalisation is not a statistical generalisation; it is a logical and analytical generalisation to other similar situations, on condition that, the cases' circumstances have to be clearly defined (Erickson, 1986; Miles and Huberman, 1994; Patton, 1990). In that sense, a case study deals with more intensive, richer, and greater depth data than other quantitative methods, although, characteristically, the number of units analysed within a case study is much less than other methods (Rowley, 2002). And the sampling size, no matter big or small, is more significantly to answer the research question sufficiently (Marshall, 1996).

4.6 Ethical Considerations

Research ethical responsibility is imperative; thus, an approval from the School Ethics Committees was obtained before any primary research was conducted and the research complied with all the 'ethical guidelines for good practice' established by the University's Ethics Committee and School Ethics Committees in order to protect participants' rights. Any kind of research should be guided by the one of the main ethical principles: 'respect for people'. Accordingly, some ethical procedures took place including an explanatory statement that was provided to the participants prior to the face to face interviews to inform them about the nature of the study and the purpose of the research (see Appendix 1). An informed consent form was also provided to the participant to ask them about their willingness to participate in the research, share their experiences and get their permission to be audio taped (see Appendix 2). It was made clear that their participation was entirely voluntary and that they had the right to withdraw themselves from the research at any time without explanation (Miller and Bell, 2002).

Participants' confidentiality during data collection and data analysis was guaranteed as participants' names and all personal details were kept anonymous to maintain privacy unless they stated otherwise in the consent form (Howe and Moses, 1999; Christians, 2000). To ensure justice which is another important code of ethics, questions were pretested and the researcher assured that all participants understood the interview questions correctly during the actual interview as well (Orb, Eisenhauer and Wynaden, 2000). It is worth mentioning that all the interviews were recorded and the transcripts were verified by the interviewees to achieve a high level of accuracy while collecting and analysing the data (see Appendix 5).

4.7 Data Analysis Plan

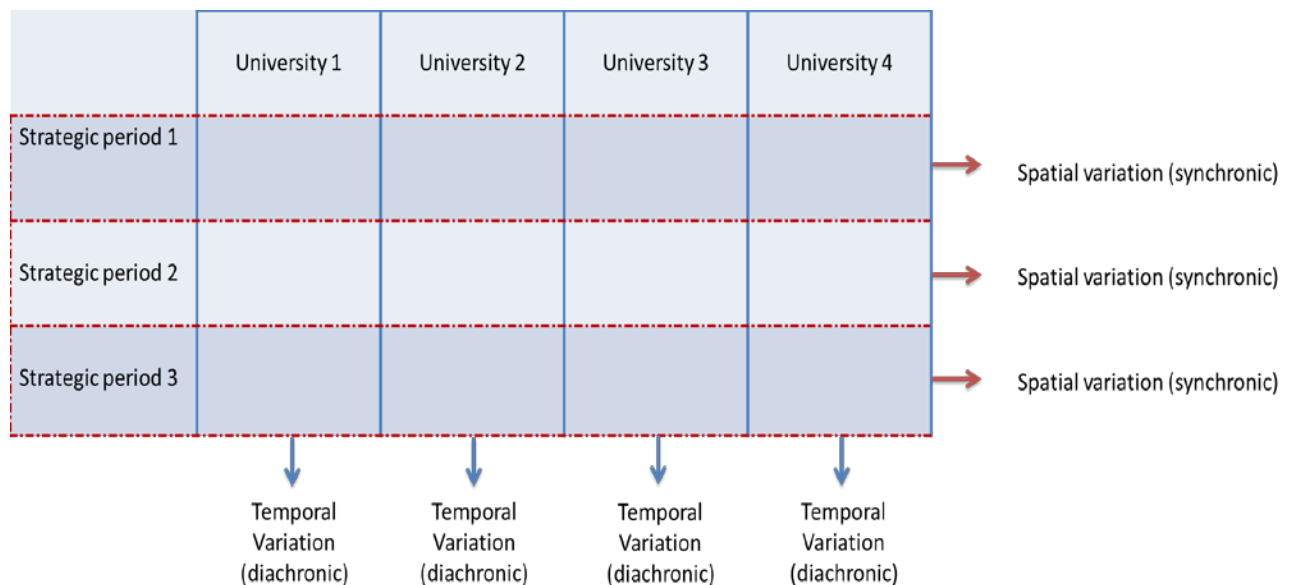
This stage aims to make sense of all the collected data. Schwandt (2007) clarified that "to analyse means to break down a whole into its components or constituent parts. Through assembly of the parts, one comes to understand the integrity of the whole". Berkowitz (1997) emphasised that the qualitative data analysis is an iterative process, not linear, as it requires revisiting previous stages and moving continually back and forth between raw data, codes, themes, and emerged connections.

Grounded theory data analysis was found to be appropriate for this research as it allows the theory to emerge, whereas the qualitative content analysis entails a data reduction process

which ignores all irrelevant data to the research question. Glaser and Strauss (1967) characterised the GT by constant comparative analysis and theoretical sampling. Given the GT methodology of data analysis, the researcher does not have to wait for the data collection phase to complete, unlike the quantitative data analysis methods. It is an iterative process of concurrent data collection and analysis where the researcher constantly compares incidents, codes, categories, and concepts until a grounded theory is fully integrated.

Theoretical sampling is “the process of collecting data for comparative analysis” (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p. 9). It means that when the initial data collection and analysis starts to develop explanations, this might suggest the expansion of the sample (theoretical/purposive sampling) and/or the collection of subsequent data. Thus, data is collected until theoretical saturation is reached; in other words, when new information does not add any further insights (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). In the current study, exploring the most recent international strategy in four different universities to spot the similarities and differences between the four cases at one point in time was the main research concern. However, a new concern was developed during the data analysis to consider the development of the international strategy over three strategic periods. A comparison between the different elements of the internationalisation strategy at each university over time was a new concern which was emerged from the participants’ answers after conducting the interviews (see Figure 10).

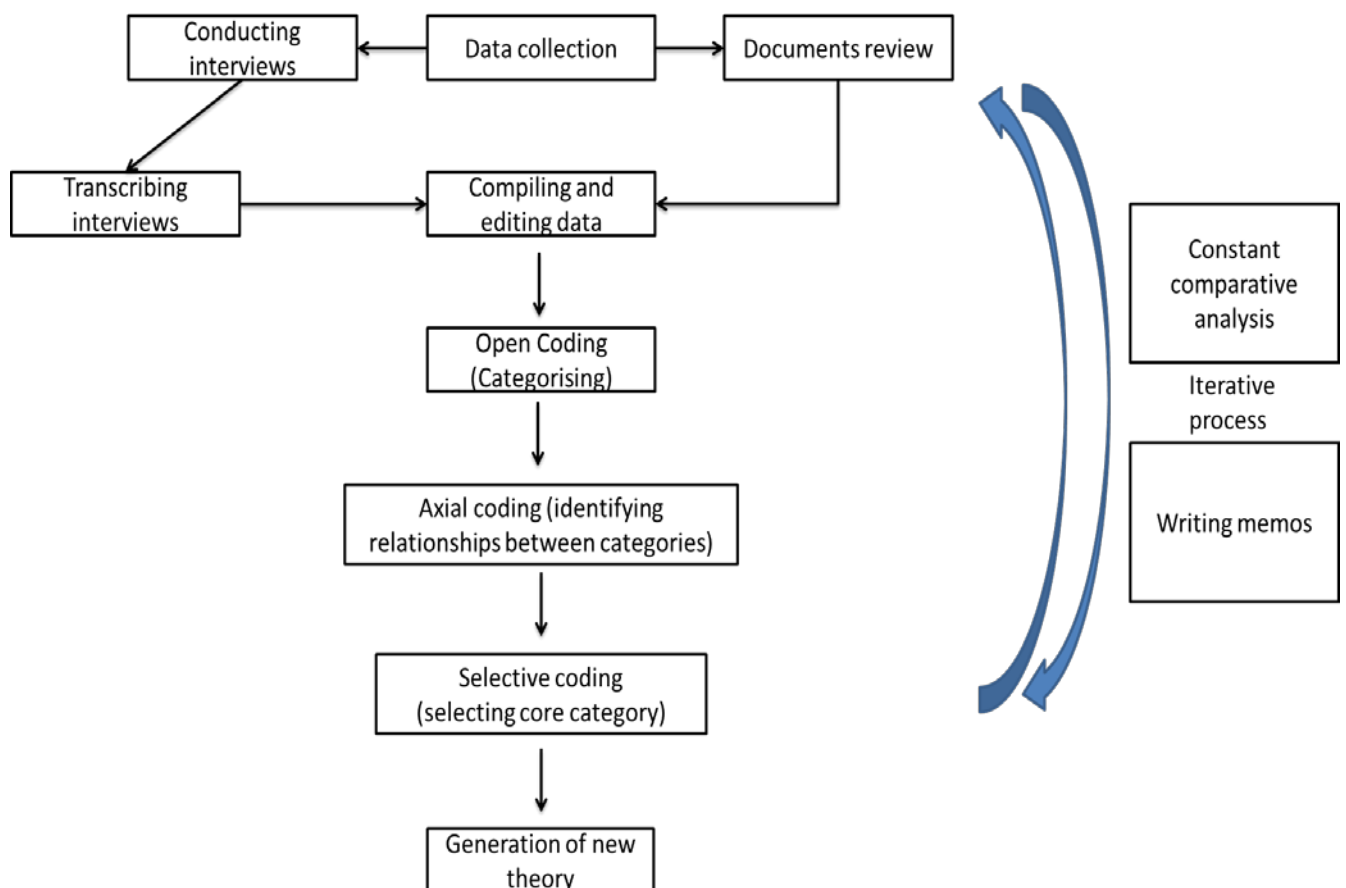
Figure 10: Case studies variation



It is advocated that the researcher has to follow a theoretical questioning approach and to be theoretically sensitive as to know how and when the data analysis directs the study to the next step (Charmaz, 2006). Being ‘theoretically sensitive’ to the need to collect more data to further investigate the evolution of the international strategy over time indicated the need to contact the participants again. Thus, supplementary questions were designed, pretested and sent via email to the research participants (see Appendix 4).

GTM uses a structured approach to data analysis and offers specific steps to follow. Figure 11 presents the framework of the GT data analysis process adopted in this research.

Figure 11: Data analysis process



After collecting and transcribing the interviews, all transcripts were read and reread to be familiar with the data and concepts while taking notes about first impressions. All raw data gathered from the interviews and collected documents were compiled together and imported to the same software for storage and screening purposes (Denscombe, 2007).

In this research, the qualitative analysis software NVivo was used to manage the research data. Although using software for data management and analysis is useful in organising data and making the coding process much easier, which saves time and effort, it does not carry out the actual analysis for the researcher (Weitzman, 2000). Using software in this study significantly supported the analysis phase in terms of organising different codes and categories in less time, finding relationships and connections easily as all the data and findings were compiled in the same place, and retrieving data effortlessly. Writing 'memos' was used from the very early stages of research to record all ideas that came out during the process of undertaking the study. It helped to crystallise ideas and develop some unique intellectual thoughts which enhanced creativity through conducting the research. Labelling data 'data coding system' is significant in the data analysis phase to capture what is in the data.

Following the GTM guidance on coding, there are three sequential series of stages which were employed in the study: open coding, axial coding and selective coding (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Open coding, also called 'line by line coding', is the first step of data analysis in which words and statements which are of importance to the respondents were identified in each line of the interview transcripts. Similar concepts were grouped in categories and conceptual labels were attached to them. In open coding, the study avoided mere description and used more analytical terminologies as Strauss and Corbin (1998) suggested e.g. 'student satisfaction' not 'student getting a good experience' and 'shared vision' not 'deciding collectively what to change in previous strategy'. Strauss and Corbin (1998) stated that a category can have different properties, in terms of specific characteristics, and dimensions, in terms of the location of the property on a continuum. For example, the category 'formation process' could have the property 'responsiveness' with dimensions ranging from 'deliberate' to 'emergent'.

The second step was to compare and contrast between categories to identify relationships and connections. This is called 'axial coding', defined by Strauss and Corbin (1998) as "the act of relating categories to subcategories along the lines of their properties and dimensions". In this stage, casual conditions, core phenomenon, strategies, contexts and consequences were looked at in order to reconnects the data and create a built-in picture of the area investigated after breaking it down using line by line coding (Charmaz, 2006). This required going back and forth through data to validate those relationships and increase the level of conceptual analysis.

After the open coding and axial coding, a core category was identified as the central phenomenon; this is called the 'selective coding'. This selective category was systematically related to all other major categories and relationships were verified which strengthened the foundation of the emerging theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Then, a story was constructed around the international strategy and other related categories using the storyline technique (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). This is to integrate and conceptualise the grounded theory and explain what is happening in a particular context.

The process of coding and developing categories using the constant comparative analysis helped to generate interpretations which explain the phenomenon under investigation and form a tentative theory. Typically, the generated theories from different studies are confirmed or disconfirmed through comparing the empirical findings to the existing theories in the reviewed literature. This is what the CGT by Glaser (1992) recommends as long as the theory has already emerged. However, due to the lack of literature about the investigated subject area, it is suggested that the current emerging theory can be proved with the help of further data collection and analysis of a wider sample.

4.8 Trustworthiness and Rigour

Qualitative research provides a holistic approach to study a phenomenon in its natural setting through an understanding of participants' perceptions, given that the topic is fairly new (Miles and Huberman, 1994). It reflects all the detailed aspects of the research topic and adds richness and depth into the data collection and analysis than quantitative research methods (Nicholls, 2011). However, qualitative research is often criticized as biased and subjective. Therefore, applying strategies to minimise the bias and evaluating the quality of research is essential. Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed four criteria to ensure validity, trustworthiness and rigour of qualitative research, which researchers seek to satisfy – credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. These were suggested to replace the internal validity, external validity, reliability and objectivity in quantitative research.

4.8.1 Credibility

Credibility is defined as the confidence in the 'truth' of the research findings and the extent to which the findings presented are genuine (Cutcliffe and McKenna, 1999). In other words, it

refers to the value and believability of the findings. From their perspective, Lincoln and Guba (1985) claimed that the credibility of a qualitative research depends more on the richness of the data collected (quality), rather than the amount (quantity). There are several techniques that can be used to establish the credibility of research methods and findings.

One of these techniques is triangulation; which “involves the use of multiple and different methods, investigators, sources and theories to obtain corroborating evidence” (Onwuegbuzie and Leech, 2007). In this research, ‘data triangulation’ and ‘methodological triangulation’ were used as there were two different methods applied – semi-structured interviews and document review – to collect data from three different sources: interviews, universities’ official websites and documents of the universities’ international strategies and overall strategies (Anney, 2014). This helped to analyse the research questions from multiple perspectives and increased the validity of the study (Patton, 1990).

Allowing ‘member checks’ or respondent validation in qualitative inquiry methodology is another technique to ensure high quality research. Member checks mean that “data and interpretations are continuously tested as they are derived from members of various audiences and groups from which data are solicited” (Guba, 1981). This is a significant quality control process that all qualitative researchers need to undergo to establish credibility (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Onwuegbuzie and Leech, 2007). In this research, interviews with senior staff who are in charge of internationalisation strategies at the participating universities were tape-recorded. This procedure was important to ensure high level of accuracy by capturing the interviewees’ answers in their own terms. Interviews then were transcribed and transcripts were sent back to the participants for verification before moving to the analysis phase (see Appendix 5).

In addition, some procedures have been taken into consideration to maintain credibility of the research findings. For example, each person who was approached had the choice to accept or refuse to participate in this study and s/he had also the right to withdraw at any stage without being penalised in any way. This was stated clearly in the consent form and signed by all participants. This helped to ensure that they are genuinely willing to take part and to ensure their honesty while providing data. The interview questions were formed in an open-ended format so that participants could speak openly about the various issues discussed. To ensure that the questions were understandable, the researcher pre-tested interview questions with

academics and modified them as needed before conducting the actual interviews. It was also important to show kindness and support to all respondents and conduct the interviews under comfortable conditions (respondents' own offices at the universities).

4.8.2 Transferability

This criterion was suggested to replace the external validity criterion applied in quantitative research. It refers to the degree in which the research can be transferred to other settings and the findings can be applied to other contexts, which dealt with the issue of generalisation (Slevin, 2002). According to Bitsch (2005), the “researcher facilitates the transferability judgment by a potential user through ‘thick description’ and purposeful sampling”. To ensure transferability, it is essential for the researcher to provide a highly detailed description of the research context, participants, methods and findings so that readers can consider their own interpretations and assess the relevance of findings to other similar contexts (Lincoln and Guba 1985). This is critical as qualitative research usually depends on a particular small number of cases which some researchers argued that its findings cannot be generalised. However, case study generalisation is not a statistical generalisation in the conventional sense; it is a logical and analytical generalisation to other similar situations, on condition that, the cases' circumstances are clearly defined (Erickson, 1986; Miles and Huberman, 1994). Thus, contextual factors were highly considered in this research; in terms of providing details of the number of case studies, justification of the chosen sampling, number of participants and their characteristics, the settings where the interviews were conducted, and the duration of interviews.

Moreover, this research offered a ‘thick’ description of the data collection and analysis process. Appropriate quotations from the participants were illustrated and detailed findings were supported by evidence; which enhances transferability (Cooney, 2010). Moreover, participants were selected based on their knowledge of the issues under investigation and their ability to answer to the research specific questions. Using this theoretical/purposive sampling provides high quality in-depth findings which facilitates transferability, than other probability samplings methods (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2000).

4.8.3 Dependability

According to Bitsch (2005), dependability refers to “the stability of findings over time”; meaning that the research findings are replicable if the study in similar contexts was repeated. This replaces the concept of reliability in quantitative research. Providing sufficient information about the research design, the procedures made throughout the research process and the rationale for the methodological decisions helps external researchers to understand the methods and their effectiveness.

There are several ways available to establish the dependability of research methods and findings such as peer examination (Anney, 2014). Peer examination involves an evaluation of the inquiry process and findings from peers, readers and colleagues to validate data. Over the duration of this research, a number of presentations and formal sessions with other post-graduate researchers were attended where there was a chance to discuss the research process and findings in order to get a constructive feedback. This helped to identify strengths and weaknesses of the research process, recognise the elements that are not covered by the research and bring fresh perspective to the study (Krefting, 1991). Lincoln and Guba (1985) argued that there are close ties between credibility and dependability; meaning that ensuring research dependability relies strongly on demonstrating research credibility. Thus, techniques applied in this research to establish credibility, which were discussed earlier, achieve dependability.

4.8.4 Confirmability

Confirmability is mainly associated with objectivity of the research and the extent to which the research findings are supported by the data collected. This is due to the assumption that case study research and qualitative research methods in general could be easily biased because they typically depend on the researcher’s interpretations (Patton, 1990). Miles and Huberman (1994) specified that the first step to establish research confirmability is to admit researcher’s own predispositions and the fact that researcher biases is inevitable. Fetterman (2010) considered this as helpful since the researcher’s interpretations give meaning to the research data. He noted that the researcher needs “an open mind, not an empty head”. Yet, some techniques should be followed to minimise bias.

In this research, Grounded Theory data collection and data analysis approaches were followed to avoid researcher bias. Due to the nature of the GT methodology adopted in this research, the researcher had no hypothesis to be tested and the main aim for the study was for exploration. This helped to avoid fitting the findings into researcher's pre-assumptions, especially that the area under investigation was fairly new to the academic literature. In addition, this research employed a 'bottom up' analysis process which started with generating the theory from analysing the data collected prior to conducting the literature review; which minimised researcher bias.

4.9 Chapter Summary and Conclusion

This chapter has described and justified the research's philosophical perspective, the data collection methods and procedures and the data analysis plan, including sampling and strategies used to ensure the ethical standards of the study. The study employed an inductive exploratory approach to study the international strategy at HEIs as a phenomenon that is not covered properly in the body of knowledge. The GTM was selected as a suitable research methodology for this study in order to construct meanings from the reality and generate a new theory which aims to fill the gap between knowledge and practice. The researcher was the main data collection instrument. Multiple sources of evidence, including semi-structured interviews and document review were implemented. Data collected were analysed using the constant comparative method which yielded from the GT approach. The next chapter discusses in detail the results obtained from the four case studies.

Chapter 5: Research Results

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter all the main research results from the empirical data collection phase are presented. The data was collected and then processed in order to answer the research questions posed in chapter one. Using the NVivo software was a great help to organise data, highlight relationships and define different categories. Two fundamental goals drove the collection of data and the subsequent data analysis. Those goals were:

- To develop a base of knowledge about the international strategies at four different universities in UK HE system as to explore how these strategies were formed and where they lie on Mintzberg and Waters' deliberate/emergent continuum
- To examine to what extent the international student social experience is embedded within the context of strategic management in HE.

To start with, a brief description about the participating universities is provided. However, to protect the respondents' confidentiality, universities' and interviewees' names will remain anonymous.

University A: (Interviewee 1)

One of the UK's modern universities; formally opened in 1930, although not yet a university. It became an independent university with the right to confer its own degrees in 1992. A total of 19,965 students are enrolled at the University (2013/14). It has 1000 international students from 100 countries worldwide as this type of University is quite locally focused. Strategy covers a period of three years.

University B: (Interviewee 2)

It is originally founded in 1824 but only granted University status in 1992. It has a total number of 25,805 enrolled students (2013/14). The University has over 2,500 international students from over 140 countries around the world. The corporate strategy at University B is reassessed and developed for the future every five years.

University C: (Interviewee 3)

It was formed originally in 1897 and gained its current name in 1905. It is a member of the Russell Group of research-intensive universities. It has a total of 25,540 enrolled students (2013/14), including 5,000 international students from 125 countries globally and it is among the top five largest recruiters of international students in UK 2013/2014. Strategic planning looks five years ahead.

University D: (Interviewee 4)

Its roots can be traced back to 1825 and it took many different forms till it became known as a University in 1992. It has a total number of 20,435 students enrolled at the University (2013/14). Currently, the University has 4000 international students from over 120 countries worldwide. At University D, they set the strategy every five years.

5.2 Research Focused Codes

There are a number of focused codes presented in this chapter and they are grouped into five main categories which the whole research findings revolve around and are explained in-detail in the next chapter. The interview questions covered different aspects of the Universities' overall strategies, and their 'international strategies' in particular, to gain an understanding of how they are formed, what elements they include, how they are responsive to internal and/or external factors, and who is involved when setting the strategic objectives.

5.2.1 Strategy Formation Process

5.2.1.1 University A

Interviewee 1 described the strategy formation process as a process of consultation and negotiation. S/he said that it starts with the Vice Chancellor (VC) but what is called the VC's Executive team, the Deputy Vice Chancellor and the Pro-Vice Chancellors (PVCs), is responsible for putting everything together. On an annual basis, an academic planning day is held where about 70/80 senior academics create a panel to discuss how everything is going on, what they want to achieve, and what needs to be changed/improved. As the VC was retiring, the interviewee mentioned that the new person might look at the strategy differently and might have different views. This means that s/he can change the University's objectives,

change the style of the whole process and even decide who should and who should not be involved, since ultimately the VC is accountable. Yet, the board has to ratify his/her decisions. The interviewee made it clear that the VC has the upper hand but, at the same time, the executives are responsible for representing their areas and they all contribute into shaping the University's vision. With regards to the international strategy, the PVC (Partnerships) is responsible for setting the international strategy. The interviewee added that “*ultimately all the strategies overseas belong to someone in the Corporate Executive Team*”; however, there is a university team reports to the PVC (Partnerships) who has to execute the international strategy and be part of it.

5.2.1.2 University B

Using the expression of “*it is a kind of team building activity*” when describing how things are going on at the University gives the indication that the vision is shared and each one of the VC group has a say in what they want to achieve as a University. Once a year, each faculty and each service write some annual plan and each of the annual plans is then discussed at a “*critical friends meeting*” where all of the VC group plus one Dean and one Director would challenge the faculty or the service about their plan. The interviewee was proudly carrying on “*so one day I will be talking about my plan, defending it, and the next day I will be asking somebody else about their plan, and all of the plans have to show how they are contributing towards the University strategic plan*”. So basically the process goes as follows, the University strategic plan has five themes and each of the objectives set by each faculty and service should contribute to one of these themes. Once the annual plans are approved, then they reset the operational plan to execute the new plan. During the professional development reviews and staff appraisals, outcomes are linked to the objectives of those plans which fit with the University's strategic plan, so everything is all very linked together.

Unexpectedly, when interviewee 2 was asked about the mechanism they are following when setting the overall strategic plan, s/he did not have a specific answer to this question. This was justified by being at the University only for four years and they set the strategy every five years, so the University's strategy already existed when s/he arrived. S/he added also that s/he cannot know what is going to happen in the future, referring to the new strategy, and how that might be formed. It is worth mentioning that there is a possibility that the same

process pursued in setting the annual plans is used when setting the overall plan. University B was in the same situation as University A as its VC was retiring and its current strategy finished in 2015 as well. They were waiting for the new VC to formulate the new strategy.

5.2.1.3 University C

Interviewee 3 referred to setting the University's strategy as a consultation process. S/he specified that it starts with the strategy group which is led by the PVC (Arts and Humanities) and supported by the Director of Strategy, Planning and Change who guides the process. Then s/he continued spontaneously and favourably *“but it is much more like let's go out and see what people are thinking and then they start crystalizing it”*. So it is more like a consultative process; they have a set of key themes such as: what they are, what they want to be globally and locally, their research priorities, the HE environment, and other various themes. So they hold workshops where each of these themes is led by one external speaker and one of the University executives, bearing in mind that different members of the University executive lead each time with the external speaker. S/he continued *“it has been a sort of ideas provoking thing. So the external speaker comes in and throws out some controversial ideas about dealing with a particular issue or saying this is what the future will look like, how you are going to respond? And then we would have a discussion”*. So this is mainly how everything begins and these themes have been open to everyone at the University to comment on. As part of the consultation process, the University has a web site which invites staff to share their ideas. Then, those themes and objectives have to get approved from the Senate and the Council members. At that point, all of this gets distilled and then they would come back with *“right, this is what you said, this is how we think, and what this means strategically”*, and then the draft will be written.

5.2.1.4 University D

The VC has its executive group which consists of: academic leaders (the Deputy Vice Chancellor, PVC (Teaching), PVC (Research), and PVC (International)) and the key service leaders (the Director of Finance, Director of Human Resources, Director of Estates and Facilities, and Director of Marketing and Communications) with whom s/he has an informal meeting every Tuesday morning. They meet every week to be updated with everything happening in different areas at the University, to see how they can change things and to take

the necessary decisions. The interviewee talked about the direct accountability in these meetings as each person starts talking about his/her area of responsibility. Using words like 'informal meeting', 'we sit around a table', 'start challenging each other about how things are moving forward' shows signs of team work, full participation, and collective contribution. The same thing takes place when creating the new strategy map.

As the main role of the VC is to drive the strategy, s/he interviews, on a one-to-one basis, roughly the top 60 leaders in the organisation (this is the VC's executive group, the Deans of Faculties, the rest of the directors, and the heads of different functions). The interviewee pointed out that the VC talks to this leadership group, which is a small percentage of around 2800 people working in the organisation, because s/he is certain that "*if this group believes in what they are doing then we will actually move forward*". S/he knows it is time consuming but it is still very important to hear their views. S/he shares these views that come out in the various areas with the senior team and asks these leaders to start shaping their areas. Then they test each of these facets with the organisation.

They also hold an open consultation where all the staff, academic and non-academic, are invited to discuss various issues. They also make this visible online to allow people to respond and give them the chance to influence the strategy. Unlike other universities, the VC believes that "*this is an academic institution, it is not a hierarchal business that is chaired by a Chief Executive*". S/he commented on the fact that normally there is a difference between the academic directors and service directors on some university issues saying that "*how can we offer good service if the service directors are out of the table when the key decisions are made? And this is why we do it like this because collectively we drive the University forward*". After the consultation session, they start to create the whole strategy map; a framework on two sides of A4, and then to present it. Once it gets a consensus, then they take it to the formal committees: the Formal Senior Management Committee, the Senate, and the University's Council for approval. This strategy map can be found everywhere in the University and serves to communicate the strategic objectives to everyone whilst reminding people all the time of what they are doing and what they want to achieve.

5.2.2 Universities' Situational Analysis

There are a number of common internal and external factors which the four participating universities underlined to be assessed prior to strategy formulation. They look at the number of international students they have and its growth compared to previous strategic periods. They also consider the ratio of international staff to international students on campuses. They use results from the International Student Barometer (ISB) to measure the social side of students' satisfaction, the National Student Survey (NSS) to measure the academic side of students' satisfaction and their own internal questionnaire to assess University's past and current performance. Assessing their own teaching and research qualities as well as other resources is very important for formulating the strategy as well.

They collect data from the HESA in terms of where the University is, where it was and what competitors are doing. In terms of the targets for the number of international students, they get national data on how many international students come to the UK from every country in the world, what subject they come to study and what university they go to. This helps to evaluate their fair share of that market and how many students they would have. In terms of the whole market, it is demographic data, depending on the type of university whether it is locally or internationally focus. They also compare their performance with competitors' performance through the ISB and NSS results. This helps to identify the University's strengths and weaknesses to make some changes such as building new buildings, enhancing the support services, and improving sports facilities. In the profile data, University D uses the QS star accreditation to benchmark itself against universities across the world. Also, University C and University D use the QS world ranking which is driven by the citations, publications, and people's perceptions of who they are. They review the influential research bodies in the world in order to align their research to that and set the research strategic direction. Universities make sure to be updated with the immigration rules and visa requirements to be considered in the new strategy in terms of sponsoring international students. Last, but not least, universities are also concerned about the international political events and international market economy which affect their international partnerships. After collecting all the required data, it has to be turned into information and then the VC, executive team and senior directors decide on the new strategic direction and strategic aims.

5.2.3 Flexibility and Responsiveness

5.2.3.1 University A

Interviewee 1 started his talk by giving an example of an event which happened few years ago. Their license for sponsoring international students, Tier4 visa students, was suspended for a short period of time in 2012 as they had an administrative issue with the Border Agency. Realizing the vulnerability of having international students, this had a major impact on their attitude to risk and even the way they process, but this did not affect the strategy. When this happened, they had to put a lot more effort into the student attendance monitoring and the new application process and the whole gamut of compliance to get the license back. Not only that, they also looked intensely at overseas partnerships as they could not just rely on international students coming to their University. So s/he underlined that this kind of event might change the kind of emphasis or it might change the strategy's implementation process in terms of the actions they need to take, but it does not necessarily change the University's strategy itself. S/he mentioned that they have to be flexible and responsive to all the surrounding factors but the strategy is still the strategy.

5.2.3.2 University B

The interviewee clarified that after setting the new strategy, direction and vision; everyone is expected to follow them. So they keep going in their strategic direction but they have to respond to things which happen along the way at the same time as things change. One of things that happened and they did not predict it about five years ago was the introduction of higher fees for English students. They were responsive and they had a lot of scenario planning through the corporate management team. They worked out a lot of options and discussed these options as a team. Then they advised the VC and the VC made the decision. Interviewee 2 emphasised the fact that they are coping with a lot of things all the time but they have not added anything to the strategic plan. S/he added *“the thing is that the strategy is broad with a lot of underling aspects. So, most of the operations should be able to fit with it”* and that the strategy should be strong and robust enough to deal with anything that might come up.

5.2.3.3 University C

As a general concept, interviewee 3 believes that the unplanned events deal with the operational level, not the strategic level. S/he supposes that for the strategy to be effective, unplanned events should not necessarily change it. As s/he defined strategy; “*it is what the University wants to be overall*”, and because there is an unplanned event does not mean that the University’s vision needs to be changed. It might mean that certain aspects at the operational level would change or would take longer than expected.

S/he mentioned changing the immigration regulations as an example; explaining in more detail the action of taking away the post-work study visa which used to allow international students to stay in the country for two years after finishing their studies and search for a job. Taking this privilege away affected all international students and Indian students in particular. This visa was a very important motive for them to come and study in UK because they quite often take loans for their overseas studies from Indian banks and these two years afterwards often help them to pay back these loans. Besides, this news made huge press in India and sent a very negative message, that is “*they do not want Indian students because they stay and work afterwards*”. As a consequence, students did not want to come, which had a negative impact. To respond to such an unplanned event, the University invested more in India to try to redress the impression of the UK and they had an international campaign to make the whole process of getting the visa look easier for Indian students. At the same time, they looked at other parts of the world to balance the situation.

Taking partnerships as another example, the interviewee explained that if they want to have five very good deep partnerships with international universities, the five that they start up with at the start of the strategy may not be the same they end up with at the end of the strategy but it does not change the wording of the strategy. It is just some might be better than others, may be a big opportunity comes up so that it becomes the important one, this might change over time but not the strategic aim itself.

5.2.3.4 University D

“*This is operational not strategic*” was the interviewee’s first answer. Then s/he justified that if the strategy is good, it should cope with any changes and take into account any unexpected perturbations. One of the perturbations is the change in government because

every time there is a change in government, there is a change in policy. As a precaution, they do not make the strategy too long neither too short, 5 years period following the governmental cycle. They try to see what the current regime is attempting to do and anticipate the kind of changes that may actually come out. They also engage with the shadow minister of HE and consider his/her thoughts on the future of HE. Accordingly, interviewee 4 shed light on the importance of considering politics and other internal/external factors to formulate the strategy in a way that still can be applied whatever change comes in.

When they set the strategy back in 2007, nobody would have expected a tripling of student tuition fees. As a response, the senior team had a lot of discussions and debates about what fee to set, why to set it, and what signal they wanted to send. This got rolled out to the leadership group and then went through the formal channels. Some people wanted to go to the £9000, others did not. As a final decision, they decided to keep the fee as it is because they were very keen on being fair; they did not want to go up to the £9000 and put unnecessary debt in terms of the services provided in return, whereas the bulk of the sector went to the £9000. They were responsive to this unplanned event but they did not change the strategy. Looking at the growth number of international students as one of the KPIs is another example. If something happened that may affect the University's ability to recruit students from a potential market, they would tackle it differently and find a better way of doing it or they would find alternative markets. So the way of how to achieve the KPI is flexible but changing the KPI itself would be quite unusual.

5.2.4 The Development of the Internationalisation Profile

Table 5 illustrates the development of internationalisation aspect as part of the University's overall strategy. The four universities were asked about how "internationalisation" featured within the University's strategy during three different strategic periods (current strategic period, previous strategic period, and the one before); 'strategic period 3' refers to the current strategy. They have been given three short answers to choose from (Not at all – Mentioned – Foregrounded and important) and each one of them had a different scenario.

Table 5: The development of ‘internationalisation’ within the Universities’ strategies

	University A	University B	University C	University D
Strategic period 1	Not at all	Not at all	Foregrounded	Not at all
Strategic period 2	Mentioned	Foregrounded	Foregrounded	Mentioned
Strategic period 3	Mentioned	Not at all	Foregrounded	Foregrounded

The development of ‘internationalisation’ within the Universities’ strategies has a noticeable implication on the international profile. Taking University D as an example, internationalisation was not a part of the strategy at first, then it was mentioned, and currently it is foregrounded. Respectively, the international profile is getting stronger as the main person responsible for the international agenda was the Head of International Office, then the Dean of International Office, and currently the PVC International. The change of the international profile at each University over three strategic periods can be seen in Table 6.

Table 6: The change of international profile in the context of Universities’ structure

	University A	University B	University C	University D
Strategic period 1	Director of International	Head of International Office	Vice Chancellor	Head of International Office

Strategic period 2	Director of International	Dean of International Faculty	Head of International Office	Dean of International Office
Strategic period 3	Director of International	Director of International	Pro-Vice Chancellor International/Partn ership	Pro-Vice Chancellor International

5.2.4.1 University A

The PVC (Partnerships) is responsible for setting the International strategy at University A and there is a team which reports to him/her which has to execute the strategy. The two main roles of the PVC (Partnerships) are: firstly, to develop the international market so that they have more high quality, undergraduate and postgraduate, international students studying on the University's campus, secondly, to develop their transitional education overseas and partnerships as well, and then underpinning all of that are elements such as the student experience. An important aim that is stated in their international strategy documents is to encourage the integration of home and international students wherever possible and to enable students to place their experience in a global context as a response to the globalisation phenomenon. The mechanisms used for implementation are revealed in-detail in section 5.2.4 (internationalisation practices). As shown in Table 5, the University did not have an international strategy in the strategic period 2006-2009. However, internationalisation featured in the University's strategy in the previous strategic period 2009- 2012 and the current strategic period 2012-2015; yet, it is not foregrounded. Moreover, the international profile has not been changed during these strategic periods, as presented in Table 6; the Director of International was/is the main person responsible for the planning and execution of their international agenda.

5.2.4.2 University B

As indicated in Table 5, University B did not have an international strategy back in 2000-2005. Then, a transformative international strategy was put in place in the previous strategic period 2005-2010 as it was the main focus of the VC at that time. During the strategic period 2010-2015, internationalisation was not featured in the University's strategy because they had

a different VC and internationalization was not the focus of the University's strategic plan. However, interviewee 2 clarified that they still apply lots of internationalisation practices which go under what they call an 'international agenda'. For example, they refurbished the undergraduate curricula and they introduced three graduate attributes to every course: entrepreneurship, digital literacy, and global outlook. So they aspire for all their undergraduates when they complete their degrees to have a global outlook which is a kind of 'internationalization strategy for undergraduates courses' as s/he called it. They are also targeting more international students to come and study at the University as well as more places to send their British students on exchange. So it is all about student mobility.

The international student experience is one of their strategic priorities as it will be mentioned in section 5.2.4; they just do not call it 'internationalisation' explicitly and they do not have a document for an international strategy. In the International Office, they are responsible for delivering marketing in international markets for international students' recruitment, international admissions and then for enrolled students, they look after exchanges, study abroad, so it is inbound and outbound mobility, international volunteering and the international social network. These are the key elements that the international agenda contains. The University witnessed lots of changes in the previous strategic period 2005-2010; changing the culture of the organisation to support internationalisation was what the University has been doing because internationalisation was a main focus of the previous VC. They designed an International Faculty to lead internationalisation across the University and a new position for International Dean was created.

5.2.4.3 University C

The process of setting the international strategy is following a similar path as setting the University's overall strategy at University C in terms of the consultation aspect. The interviewee was the Director of International who is not only running the International Office but running everything related to the whole thing of 'international' at the University. S/he has the University International Board which is comprised of the PVCs of the five faculties, PVC Research, PVC Learning and Teaching (L&T), faculty leads plus directors of service areas that are heavily involved such as Student Services. They would all have a discussion about the strategic focus and then they set the strategic direction. Underneath that they have an operations group which does the day to day implementation of these strategic aims. This

group receives the latest version of the new strategy for their comments and input before it is finalised. So it is more of a “*top-down bottom-up process*”.

The university has got five key themes underpinning their international strategy: broadening out their research funding and being connected with the best research groups across the world in particular subject areas, developing a small number of large scale partnerships, increasing diversity across campus through maintaining the level of recruitment they have of international students and increasing the number of the European Union (EU) students, providing an international experience for staff and home/international students, and last area is about engaging more with international alumni. It seems from Table 5 that internationalisation is well-grounded at University C for a long period of time unlike the other three Universities. It was interesting knowing that the VC was in charge of ‘international’ in 2000-2005 and this is from the interviewee’s memory as s/he said that the VC was very active but there is no one left in the institution who can say who had the overall responsibility at that time. This could show the importance of internationalisation as a core element of the VC’s strategic emphasis during this strategic period. In 2005-2010, the Head of International Office was responsible for the international agenda and then they appointed a PVC (International) and gave ‘international’ a higher profile.

5.2.4.4 University D

The University has three strategic priorities: Teaching, Research, and International. In terms of the structure of leadership, the University has PVC (Learning and Teaching), PVC (Research and Enterprise), and PVC (International), and so the leadership in the organisation has equal importance in each of the areas. When the current VC came in the beginning of the previous strategic period 2008-2013, ‘international’ was not performing as it should be compared to other universities and the benchmark figures were only recruiting measures. So to increase market share, ‘international’ had to be developed fundamentally and a cultural change in the organisation was needed. The VC appointed an academic to be the Dean of the International Office unlike a lot of the International Offices in UK universities which are led by non-academics where it is usually recruitment driven. Actually, this was the case at University D in the strategic period 2003-2008; however, things has improved since then (see Table 6). This structural change sent a very powerful message about the importance of ‘international’ because it went from a ‘low-level’ head to a professor/senior academic. The

VC wanted somebody who would understand the broader perspective of international; for him/her, it goes beyond recruiting international students. Internationalization is also about enhancing reputation, engaging in international research, creating international strategic partnerships on various agendas. There is also the symbolism associated with it; as when the Dean of International Office meets the principals and presidents overseas who are generally academics, it would be an academic to academic engagement and communication would take a different path. In the current strategic period 2013-2018, the University witnessed a new structural change as the University wanted to strengthen the international aspects. Therefore, the Dean of International was promoted to the PVC (International) in order to show that international has exactly the same weight as teaching and research. In Table 5, it is shown that internationalisation went through different phases over three strategic periods till it became a key strategic aim; this happened incrementally as there was nothing about internationalisation in the University's strategy at first, then it was mentioned underneath some other aspects, and currently it becomes a strategic priority.

5.2.5 Internationalisation Practices

The four Universities have been asked the same question: 'what actions have been taken to develop internationalization at the University?'. Each University specified the kind of activities undertaken and the mechanisms used to support internationalisation across the University while placing a huge emphasis on the international student social experience.

5.2.5.1 University A

In terms of internationalization, it is stated that 'everybody is getting an international experience from one another'. They want international students to get a good cultural experience and UK students to integrate with international students which give them all a far broader perspective of life. Interviewee 1 added that they have been trying several years to internationalise the curriculum to help their students get more international experience. Besides, the University looks at things such as buddy schemes so that current students help new students and local students help international students. The interviewee mentioned that this would be easier in schools where there is more cultural mix such as the School of Arts and Media where the majority are international students and there is studio-based group work where they have to communicate with their lecturers all the time, which might not be the case

in other schools and subjects. They also tried to promote exchanges through motivating local students to study outside the UK which is very difficult due to home commitments, leaving friends, and the difficulty of getting part time jobs among others reasons. The University pays considerable attention to international students' social life as well and they have a social programme run throughout the whole academic year to ease their adjustment process. For example, they have an English café to encourage all international students to come to drink some tea or coffee, speak English, and communicate with others. They always have an international reception with the VC which all international students are invited to, so they can mix, have quiz, raffles and food which is always a great night that international students look forward to. The Students' Union (SU) has officers who look after international and they have different societies including international societies for cultural engagement and sports clubs including the English language club. Some schools have their own kind of international reception where students can meet the staff. With all this effort mentioned on the social side, the interviewee addressed the difficulty of getting particular groups to engage.

5.2.5.2 University B

The interviewee started his/her talk about the marketing and student recruitment stages. The University try to make sure that they provide accurate, official, impartial information on what it is like to study at the University and complement that with their international student ambassadors' input in sharing their experience. S/he mentioned that the International Office is responsible for everything from first enquiry to arrival, so that includes the pre-departure briefing, helping international students transfer to the city, welcoming them, and then induction and settling in. The International Office works together with Student Services because they are running the same programme for home students and the University wants international students to integrate as quickly as possible. So they do a programme of activities some of which are mixed together with everybody and some of which are tailored for international students which might be around health care, visas, settling in, and community building. They take the induction experience and extend it through the year. Social activities are not only for international students, but for UK students as well. They target particularly UK students for outbound mobility and students themselves want to have more international experiences. So by bringing them into the international social network, they get to have those experiences before they leave the UK. It also helps international students meet people from the UK which is traditionally quite challenging to do. Those events might be purely social or

some more formal events such as: the buddy scheme, monitoring scheme, and ambassadors' scheme where students can sign up to participate if they wish. In terms of employability, they have an Associate Director for employability within Students Services; this includes the career service and the JobShop. Each faculty has a placement office and there is a central placement office to help students do local or international internships and paid employment in summer or maybe by extending their courses and having a year in industry. With regards to the curriculum, they refurbished all of their undergraduate and postgraduate courses to combine 'academic knowledge' and 'professional skills', which the Quality Assurance Agency commented on as an example of good practice in 2014.

5.2.5.3 University C

The interviewee mentioned that University C has five key themes in its internationalisation strategy: Research, Partnerships, Recruitment, Staff and students experience, and Alumni engagement. Underpinning these themes, there are operational plans with the KPIs. S/he clarified that they try to broaden their research funding outside the UK; they are working on engaging more with the EU and having relevant partnerships with the best research groups across the world in particular subject areas. For partnerships, they develop a small number of large scale partners in many different types of activities through student exchange, research in various areas, and some schools join courses. They want to increase the level of recruitment they have of international and EU students in order to maintain diversity across campus. From their point of view, the key thing with the student experience is that students and staff are becoming global citizens. The University has intra-curricular activities; for example, they have cross-faculty module where all of the streams of a certain faculty/school work together cross-subjects on a project for two weeks in a year. Then the opportunities outside the curriculum would be exchange, summer schools, and volunteering. In terms of the social side, they liaise more with the SU which has a sabbatical international student officer who is on the University's International Board and the operations group. With regards to social events, the interviewee said that they have two major events that take place throughout the academic year; the international cultural evening and the international food festival along with other international events and exhibitions. For things like integration and support of international students, Student Services Department looks after that. With their staff, they try to attract the best talent from across the world and similarly they want their staff to be open-minded globally and expect them to do sabbaticals internationally with partners. Last but not least, they

engage more with their international alumni in terms of linking student societies with the alumni society. This way, alumni can share their experiences with current and new students. They believe that this connection is important because alumni, especially those who have valuable corporate links, can offer careers advice and even students' internships to international students when they go back to their home countries.

5.2.5.4 University D

Interviewee 4 explained that to ensure internationalisation in University D, it was important to reflect this in its leadership and structure as it required a cultural change in the organisation. In terms of international experience, s/he highlighted that they want their home students to have international experience while they are studying at the University and international students to integrate with other cultures as well. They want all students to have a global mind-set and to be globally employable and culturally agile. They support this by providing summer schools, internships and volunteering opportunities internationally. It was explained that they are internationalising the curriculum and using international case studies to give students that broader perspective of what is going on in the whole world. The interviewee said that they are using social media that links international students before they actually arrive to the University through their Freshers' page on Facebook which is a nice introduction and a good part of students' experience. They are relying on the ambassadorial aspect of students as there is a massive difference between members of staff saying this is a good place to come to and a fellow student saying the same. They provide a pre-sessional for international students so they get the chance to be in before the main things start which is a better introduction of experience. They also provide a free of charge pick-up service for international students and welcome them in the airport and train stations. Then, there is an induction week where they help students to settle in, get to know different services on campus, and organize a social programme to help students make new friends. They organize a number of different events throughout the academic year as part of the international social network. The SU and faculties organise their own events too. The career services and Job Shop provide over 100,000 hours of paid employment per year to their students and the 'skills for life' agenda is there as well. They also try to connect with research groups across the world and access research funding inside and outside the UK.

On a longer time-scale, Universities have been asked about the main elements of the Universities' international agenda over three strategic periods. Table 7 provides an understanding of the growth and expansion of internationalisation over time.

Table 7: The main elements of the international agenda at the case study Universities

	University A	University B	University C	University D
Strategic period 1				
R	✓	✓	✓	
E	✓		✓	
P			✓	
M				
C				
F				
C/E				
Strategic period 2				
R	✓	✓		✓
E	✓	✓	✓	✓
P			✓	
M		✓	✓	
C		✓	✓	
F				
C/E				
Strategic period 3				
R	✓	✓	✓	✓
E	✓		✓	✓
P			✓	✓
M			✓	✓
C	✓		✓	
F		✓		
C/E			✓	

R	Recruiting international students	E	International student experience
P	International research partnerships	M	Outward student mobility
C	Internationalisation of courses	F	International franchising
C/E	Global citizenship, Global employability		

(Author's work)

5.2.6 International Students’ Challenges and Consequences

It was found that a large number of universities recently are using the ISB as an important indicator of their international students’ satisfaction, which is mainly concerned with the student social experience. The researcher contacted an Account Manager from the i-graduate and developed Table 8 which illustrates the number of UK institutions which started to use the ISB and how the number was increased every year. i-graduate was established in 2005 with a founder group of 11 UK universities taking part in the ISB, which increased to 115 universities in 2015.

Table 8: Number of UK HE institutions participating in the ISB

Autumn Wave		Summer Wave		Spring Wave	
Year	No. UK Unis	Year	No. UK Unis	Year	No. UK Unis
2005	20	2005	10	2005	
2006	38	2006	29	2006	23
2007	73	2007	56	2007	28
2008	70	2008	69	2008	
2009	59	2009	52	2009	
2010	60	2010	49	2010	
2011	55	2011	45	2011	
2012	60	2012	49	2012	
2013	54	2013	13	2013	
2014	54	2014	12	2014	
2015	TBC	2015	12	2015	

It is worth mentioning that i-graduate ran the spring, autumn and summer Waves for 2006 and 2007 only. The continuous summer drop since 2009 was due to a push for a once a year solution to combat over-surveying students. The summer wave also clashes with the NSS, hence why they made the Autumn/Entry wave as the key point to capture students’ opinion and the arrival decision-making data. The majority of universities run the Autumn Wave and some see the results of the ISB as an early prediction of what scores to expect in the NSS.

5.2.6.1 University A

Interviewee 1 believes that a good international student experience is all about getting as seamless and painless experience as possible till they settle in and then it is about helping students enjoy their experience and become part of the University’s community. S/he said that there is a number of stressors face international students during their overseas studies. If they are financially poor and they almost need to work that is definitely a stress - both finding a job and fitting the job around their study- especially students who are not sponsored. Living away from home and in a totally a different culture is another stressor. S/he thinks that

language is a big issue particularly where English is not a kind of natural second language such as in China. And the danger if Chinese wrapped this stress by going together because their English gets worse as they live together in the same house, hang out together, sit next to each other in classes, best one takes notes and then afterwards they go to the library and discuss things in Chinese. It is tough unless the University can find a way of getting people to engage very early, socially as well. The consequences of that could be that sometimes their English gets worse, sometimes they might drop out, sometimes they will not get degrees that they are academically capable of getting because they have not expressed themselves. One of the big issues for international students is dealing with self-directed study where they have got to take far more responsibility for themselves which is different from their traditional environment and that is one of the shocks they get when they arrive. This transition is huge. The interviewee thinks that it is more difficult if students are top up students so they are studying overseas only for a year and being totally independent all of a sudden. So it is about learning and unless students can adapt to the environment, then they will not necessary have good experience even if they enjoyed their social life; so it is mixed.

5.2.6.2 University B

Interviewee 2 mentioned finance as a very big stressor and the language as another one if they are not from a country that speaks English as a native language. S/he added that even for students who are from a country that speaks English as a native language, still being far from home is not easy. It is easy only when they live an hour away so they can go home and see their parents; however, going back regularly is difficult when they live a long way away. S/he also added that when there are difficulties at their home countries in terms of social unrest or political unrest, students will have extra worry about how their family are actually safe. S/he concluded that being abroad for a long time is tiring in general. As a result, interviewee 2 thinks that it makes students try harder academically because they really value the experience and the fact that they are doing what they chose to do and are paying to do, so they work hard. So basically the University are constantly working on the way in which they interface with potential students and then the way in which they work with them during the application process to try and make it smooth as possible and then when students arrive as to ensure that international students get a good experience.

5.2.6.3 University C

Interviewee 3 thinks that for non-native language speakers, studying overseas is a big issue in terms of how they are going to perform, worrying about whether they are good enough or not, and adapting to a different teaching and learning style. S/he also talked about other things such as the difficulty of making international friends and that making the effort to be outside of one's own cultural group could be very tiring. S/he explained that if students spend all day speaking in a second language it is the last thing they want to do when they get home at night so people tend to stick with their own groups which is completely understandable. However, they will not get it all out of their international experience as a result. It is a real dilemma because ideally the University would like students to be fully integrated. The big problem is that they live together, study together, eat together and play together so what happens is that their language often get worse not better and this is really a difficult thing to tackle. When there is a big population of Chinese students for example, they tend to be the least confident in integrating and mixing, others are more integrated. For some students, sometimes it is financial difficulties. For sponsored students, it could be worries about money if the money does not get transferred on time or quite often the embassy may not be very good at paying the fees and students then find themselves cannot get into the library for example. Of course being away from their families is another important stressor as well, especially if anything happens at home.

5.2.6.4 University D

Interviewee 4 mentioned the homesickness and the difference in culture as the main stressors to deal with. Another major stress is the different teaching style and education system. That difference can be across a whole range of things, it can be the physical style of teaching as UK universities tend to be more informal in the way they teach compared to some overseas universities, the style of assessment, and the expectations. So for example, the French system tends to be very intensive where students get lots of questions to do, then they get feedback from those questions, then there is in class test and then mid-semester test, so lots of assessments whereas the style in the UK is not like that, it tends to be more open types of questions, less hours in class, more self-studying. There are some added complexities such as visas to sort out, banking facilities, even basic things on first arrival such as transport, how to find accommodation, and how to use local supermarkets. Another stress is associated with finance because they may have to get part time jobs instead of using that time to study. The worst

outcome is when a student says I cannot do this and go, which does happen occasionally, not just with international students, but with UK students as well. This is not in favour of anybody because the students themselves feel that they failed and the University staff feel they have let the student down. The other consequence is that they underperform academically as it takes a while to adapt and get used to a new teaching style. Also those cultural and social aspects make some students feel lonely or unhappy.

5.3 Chapter Summary and Conclusion

This chapter has presented the results of the semi-structured interviews and document review. Firstly, a brief description of the four participating university has been provided. Then, the open codes from this research have been grouped into the main focused codes which are presented in six sections. Each of these sections has been divided into four sub-sections to represent data collected from each university. The results presented in this chapter demonstrate the potential for merging theory and practice. In the next chapter, an analysis of the results followed by a discussion of the research findings will be provided.

Chapter 6: Analysis and Discussion

6.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, all results from the interviews' initial questions, supplementary questions and document review were grouped into focused codes using participants' spoken and written words in order to ensure validity. In this chapter, all the data collected are analysed and interpreted to provide an explanation of the phenomenon under study and to generate a theory. This chapter has two parts: part one presents the main categories which resulted from the qualitative analysis using a GT approach and addresses the relationships and connections between these categories and the core category which are the basis of the GT. Part two reveals the main research findings which are relevant to international strategy in HEIs and originated from the categories and relationships connecting them. Then, these empirical findings are compared to the relevant extant literature to verify and strengthen the theory.

6.2 Grounded Theory Main Categories

The main grounded theory categories developed from the empirical results are:

- GT Category A: Internationalisation in HEIs
- GT Category B: International student experience
- GT Category C: International strategy
- GT Category D: Deliberate-emergent strategy
- GT Category E: Strategic change (Core category)

6.2.1 GT Category A: Internationalisation in HEIs

From the interviewees' answers during the interviews and from a review of universities' overall strategies, as well as their international strategies, it was recognised that 'internationalisation' is a holistic approach and term. The concept is not only associated with international students as the term may imply; rather, it is used broadly across universities to include students (home, EU, and international students) and staff from all different levels. This diversity brings different cultures, capabilities and languages in one place which helps "*everybody to get an international experience from one another*" as one of the participants

described. Participants clarified that internationalisation crystallises everything universities do; it colours all different aspects in teaching and research and it is practiced in the form of extra-curricular activities as well, to influence the students' academic and social experiences positively (see section 6.2.2). Although, this internationalised attitude started at an operational level at first, it developed over years until it becomes a shared culture and one of the main strategic priorities (see section 6.2.3 and section 6.2.4). The four universities were found to be implementing some key practices as part of their international strategy as follows (see Figure 12):

Figure 12: Internationalisation of higher education



(Author's work)

- Internationalisation of the curriculum in terms of the content itself, using comparative international case studies, and applying teaching and learning techniques which allow the exchange of knowledge, skills, attitudes and experiences of students from different backgrounds and cultures.
- Inbound and outbound student mobility in the form of international exchange and study abroad programmes; focusing not only on recruiting a diversified student body

from around the world, but also to encourage home students to study overseas so that all students acquire intercultural competencies.

- International social programme; holding social events and international activities throughout the academic year e.g. buddy scheme, international and cultural celebrations, SU and international societies, and building community campaigns.
- Global internships and employability (including placement year and volunteering opportunities); preparing and encouraging current and alumni students to get overseas work experience through an internationalised curriculum, personal development workshops, and career services.
- International partnerships; developing collaborations with international institutions in research, scholarships, programmes and student and staff exchange.
- International research; connecting with research groups across the world and accessing research funding inside and outside the UK.

6.2.2 GT Category B: International Student Experience

From reviewing the main themes of universities' strategies and KPIs, it was found that an 'international student experience' is significantly looked at while setting the strategy. Respondents agreed on the fact that 'academic experience' is not the precise wording to be used to describe a student experience anymore; as it is much broader than the academic aspects of the learning process. From their descriptions of the 'international student experience', four main aspects were highlighted: the transition journey, academic experience, social integration, and global citizenship. Having a good international experience means that students' adjustment process is as seamless as possible, that they are satisfied and challenged by the teaching and research quality, that they are fully integrated socially where they can create their own international social network, and they are properly equipped with the skills to succeed in a global community. This can also be seen through the surveys used to measure students' satisfaction as it was proved that the four universities are participating in the ISB and NSS, which together assess all these different aspects of a student experience. Participants clarified that the internationalisation practices which they are employing at universities, which are stated in section 6.2.1, help them to provide a competitive international experience to their students. Since traditional education was mainly concerned with the teaching and research experience, participants focused more on talking about students' social needs and their social satisfaction as a new concept to be discussed at a

strategic level. They listed the main social stressors faced by most international students which reveal the reason why students' social experience really matters. The common social stressors are: home sickness, cultural differences, language barrier especially for those whose English is not their second language, and the difficulty of making new international friends. They relate this to being exposed to a different culture, language, and education system. Although some of the participants assume that this might affect students' academic performance negatively and one of them expects the opposite, they all believe that these barriers prevent international students from enjoying their social life. Either way, senior managers at universities believe that students' social satisfaction is very important for them to get the best out of their international experience, to the extent that it becomes a key feature embedded within the universities' strategies in order to maintain a sustainable competitive advantage in a globalised community.

6.2.3 GT Category C: International Strategy

Universities recently have adopted international strategies in order to cope with the challenges of globalisation. One of the main international strategic objectives, which is common among the four universities, is international recruitment; to increase the number of international students. This is the core point from which "the whole internationalisation thing" started from. The internationalisation aspect has developed over years till it has become a vital part of universities' overall strategy. In order to encourage global perspectives and shape new generations into international citizens, these universities assign the same weight to their international strategy as to their teaching and research strategies. Interviewees explained that international strategy is not seen separately from the teaching and research strategies; however, they are interconnected in many different ways. They follow a top-down bottom-up approach while formulating the strategy; mainly the senior managers identify the strategic objectives, devise an action plan of how to achieve these objectives, and set KPIs to measure the performance. However, it takes the shape of a consultation process where all university staff get involved in articulating the final version of the strategy through an open session held to discuss key strategic aspects. In doing so, effective communication plays its role in closing the gap between formulating and implementing the strategy. Interviewees confirmed that staff become more willing to implement the strategy with passion when they participate in setting the strategy and feel they are part of it. Each university uses a set of KPIs to monitor the implementation of this strategy and to measure the university's

performance. As universities have interconnected objectives and related interconnected KPIs with regard to teaching, research and international, relevant KPIs to the international aspect in particular were selected and grouped as follows using generic terms without any specific numbers or percentages which vary inevitably among universities:

- Being among the top English universities for the percentage of international students
- Achieving a high percentage for overall student satisfaction with their university experience measured by NSS, which is concerned more with the academic experience
- Scoring high for overall students' satisfaction with their university experiences measured by ISB, which is concerned more with the social experience
- Percentage of international academic staff
- Increasing the number of internationally recognised research outputs by academic staff
- Achieving a high QS Star Rating (this is an international benchmarking system that evaluates universities against over 50 different indicators such as teaching and learning, international reputation, access, and employability).

6.2.4 GT Category D: Deliberate/Emergent Strategy

It was clearly stated by all participants that international strategies are deliberately planned for, which is the effective way to get things done from their point of view. They added that they analyse the market precisely, try to anticipate everything that could happen, identify their strategic aims and enabling actions critically, and stick firmly to this in order to avoid any major unplanned events that may require making changes to any element of the strategy. Due to the rapidly changing environment of the HE sector, changes are inevitable. However, interviewees confirmed that they plan for a strategy that is robust enough to cope with any changes at an operational level. Some of the examples provided in section 5.2.3 demonstrate that having a deliberate strategy does not conflict with having a flexible strategy; simply because for the strategy to be effective, the university's vision, strategic direction and main objectives should not be changed over the specified strategic period. However, the emphasis, processes, and certain aspects can be adopted easily to be responsive to the market and environment; as one of the participants commented that "*the strategy is broad with a lot of underling aspects. So, most of the operations should be able to fit with it*". On the other hand, a key point to make here is that the international strategy itself was developed over time, which will be discussed in-detail in section 6.3.1. Participants' answers to the supplementary

questions indicate the development of the ‘internationalisation’ feature in the universities’ strategies over three different strategic periods (see Table 5), the change associated with the international profile at the participating universities (see Table 6), and the expansion of the main elements which underpin the international strategy (see Table 7).

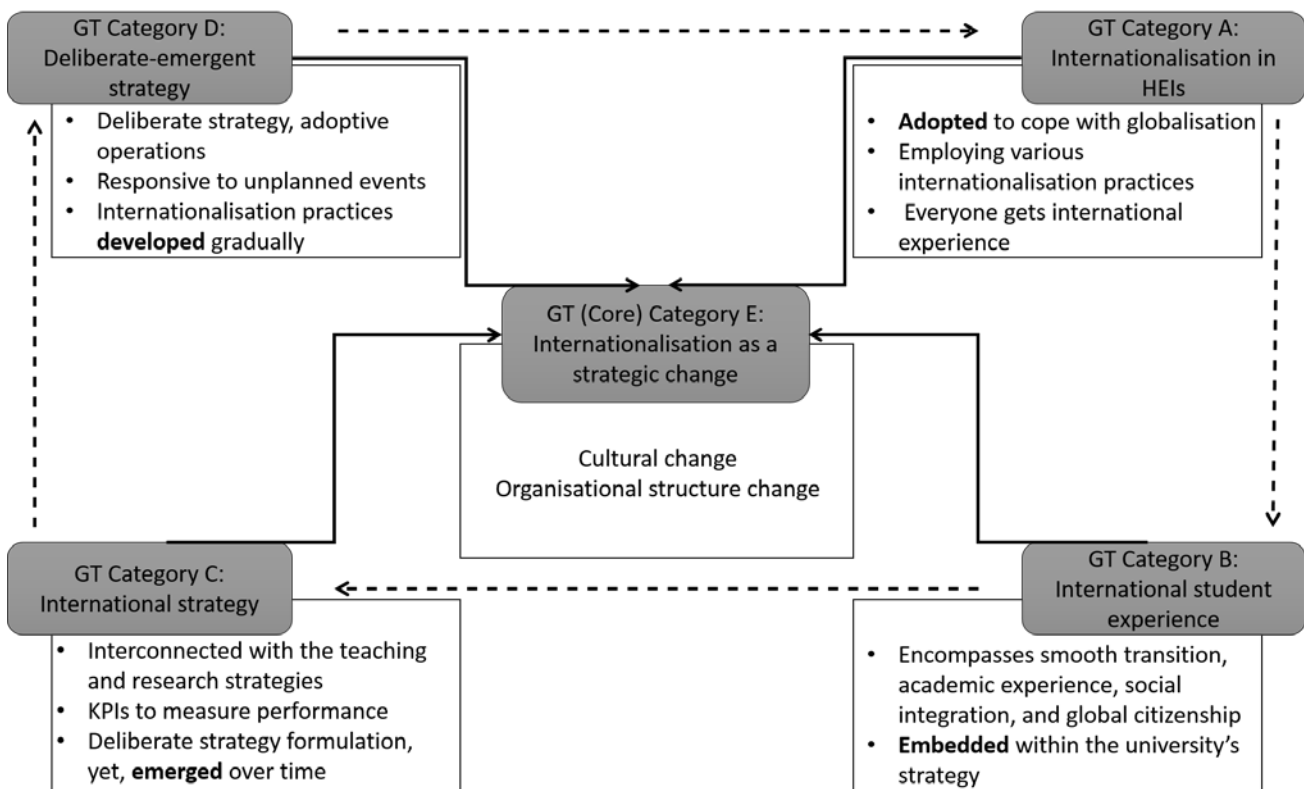
6.2.5 GT Category E: Internationalisation as a Strategic Change (Core Category)

Although nothing was mentioned literally about a ‘strategic change’ during the interviews, all data collected analytically revolved around the concept of internationalisation as a strategic change. This is why it was chosen as the core category for the grounded theory. The notion of internationalising everything at the universities could not occur without altering the university’s culture. Internationalisation is not only applied at the operational level as before; it is promoted to encapsulate each and every act that is taking place on and off campus. Moreover, it is not only about performing a number of international practices, it became a shared culture among students and staff across the university and core part of the universities’ vision which is shared by all staff. Additionally, the development of internationalisation over different strategic periods required changing organisational structure as to create new roles and assign new strategic tasks. One of the participants noted that *“before I became the PVC (International), we did not have a PVC (International); so it was a new role. Now we have University International Committee and International Director in each school to take the international agenda forward”*. Another participant stated that during the strategic period 2000-2005, they used to have an International Office where the internationalization function was only dealt with at an operational level; whereas during the strategic period 2005-2010, internationalization was a main strategic focus of the new VC and that they had a new ‘International Faculty’ and Dean of International Faculty to lead the internationalization of the university. Thus, universities’ structures have been reformed and universities’ cultures have been adjusted in order to have an effective international strategy and implement it successfully.

This section summarises the relationships between the final categories and relates each of the categories to the Core category ‘strategic change management’. The below figure illustrates the relationships connecting the main GT categories and demonstrates the storyline behind the theory generated (see Figure 13). In order to cope with globalisation and sustain a competitive advantage, universities responded through adopting a number of internationalisation initiatives (GT Category A). The main aim of these internationalisation

initiatives is to provide an international experience to home and international students (GT Category B). The international student experience has similar meanings for participants which are mainly concerned with students' academic and social experiences. Due to the importance of international students' experience during their overseas education, it is embedded within the context of the university's international strategy (GT Category C). This international strategy is deliberately formulated prior to execution; however, it started as a number of internationalisation initiatives and then emerged over years (GT Category D). The GT Category D relates to the Core category 'strategic change management' (GT Category E), in that there was an organisational change and a cultural change taking place while the international strategy emerged over a number of years.

Figure 13: Relationship between Grounded Theory Categories



(Author's work)

6.3 Research Findings

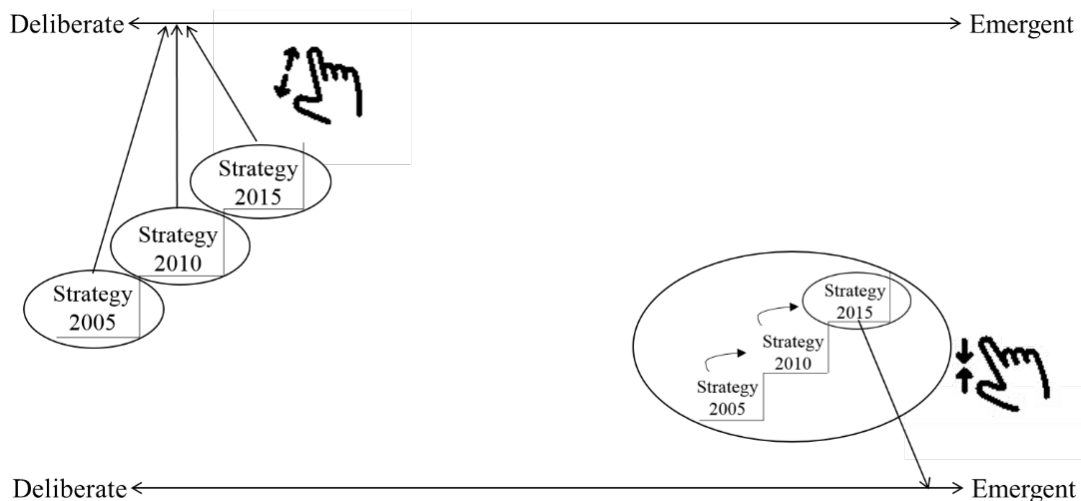
This second part of the chapter focuses on three main findings which capture the international strategy phenomenon. These findings are based on the GT categories developed from interviews and document review as presented in part one of this chapter. The comparison

between these research findings and relevant academic literature leads to the development of the main argument of this study.

6.3.1 Finding 1: Evolution of the Internationalisation Function in HEIs

All participants emphasised that universities’ strategies are deliberate to include the set of strategic objectives they plan for, the strategy formulation process they go through and the KPIs they use to monitor their progress. However, data analysis revealed that the international strategy has emerged over time in terms of growing the internationalisation elements and giving internationalisation a higher profile compared to previous strategic periods. As mentioned in the methodology chapter (section 4.7), supplementary questions (see Appendix 4) were sent to the participants after conducting the initial interviews due to the need to collect more data about universities’ previous strategies. From analysing the data collected from each university and pointing out the similarities and differences, it was recognised that the international strategy at each university was seen as a deliberate strategy when considering each strategic period separately, while it was seen as an emergent strategy when considering a number of strategic periods on a wider time frame (see Figure 14).

Figure 14: Deliberate and emergent strategies in a different time frame

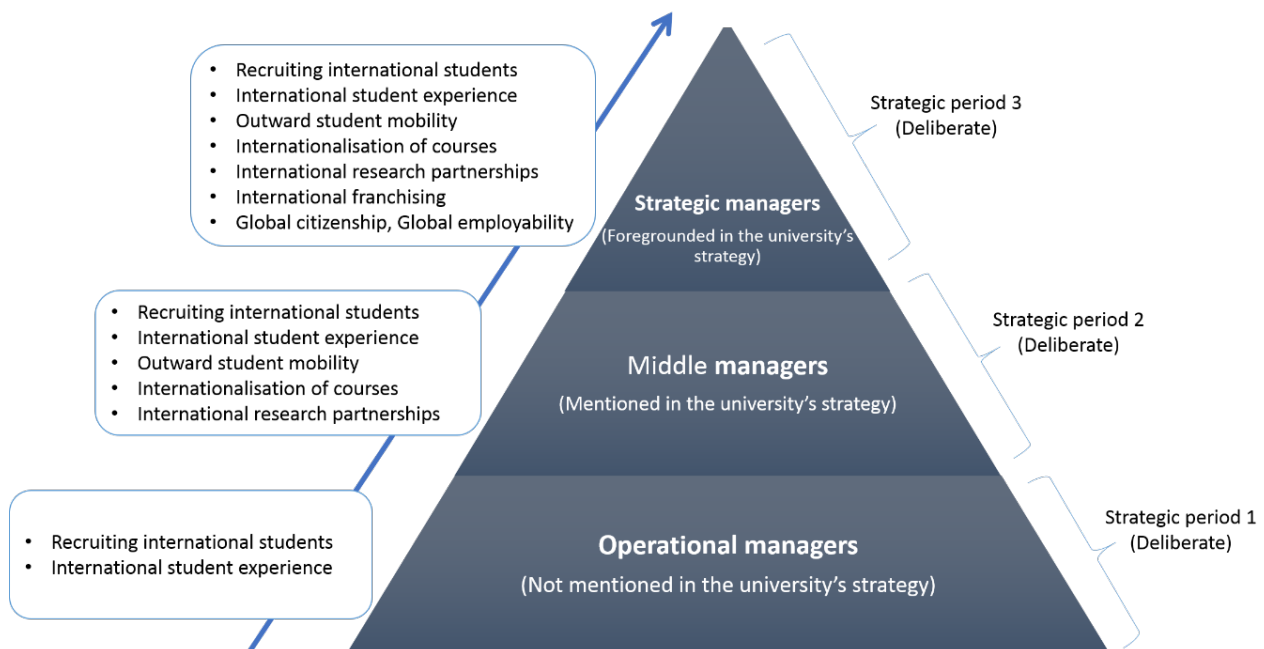


In the literature, Mintzberg and Waters’ (1985) claimed that real-world strategies lie on a continuum with the extreme deliberate pole at one end and the extreme emergent pole at the other end. Lynch (2006) seems to support the same perspective, as explained in section 3.3. Mintzberg and Waters (1985) specified the main differentiating features of deliberate and

emergent strategies. Among those characteristics are the presence of the intention and the notion of planning for everything prior to execution. The presence of intention is a main aspect of deliberate strategies where everything is planned for prior to execution. On the other hand, emergent strategies are considered as actions that emerged within an organisation to adapt to the turbulent environmental imposed patterns with the absence of intention. The current study sheds light on the importance of ‘time frame’ as a key aspect to be considered to determine the type of strategy. It is clear from interviews and documents that universities’ current international strategies are all deliberate with clear objectives, plans, and KPIs during the current strategic period (short time frame). Yet, looking through three strategic periods (longer time frame) changes the way it looks because it was not planned to have an international strategy or even to foreground the internationalisation function within universities’ strategies 10 years ago. This priority has developed over a number of years.

This research suggests that three developmental phases can be identified in the evolution of the internationalisation function in HEIs, as illustrated in Figure 15. The diagram can be used as a roadmap, which is useful for visualizing how internationalisation changes over time.

Figure 15: Evolution of the internationalisation function in HEIs



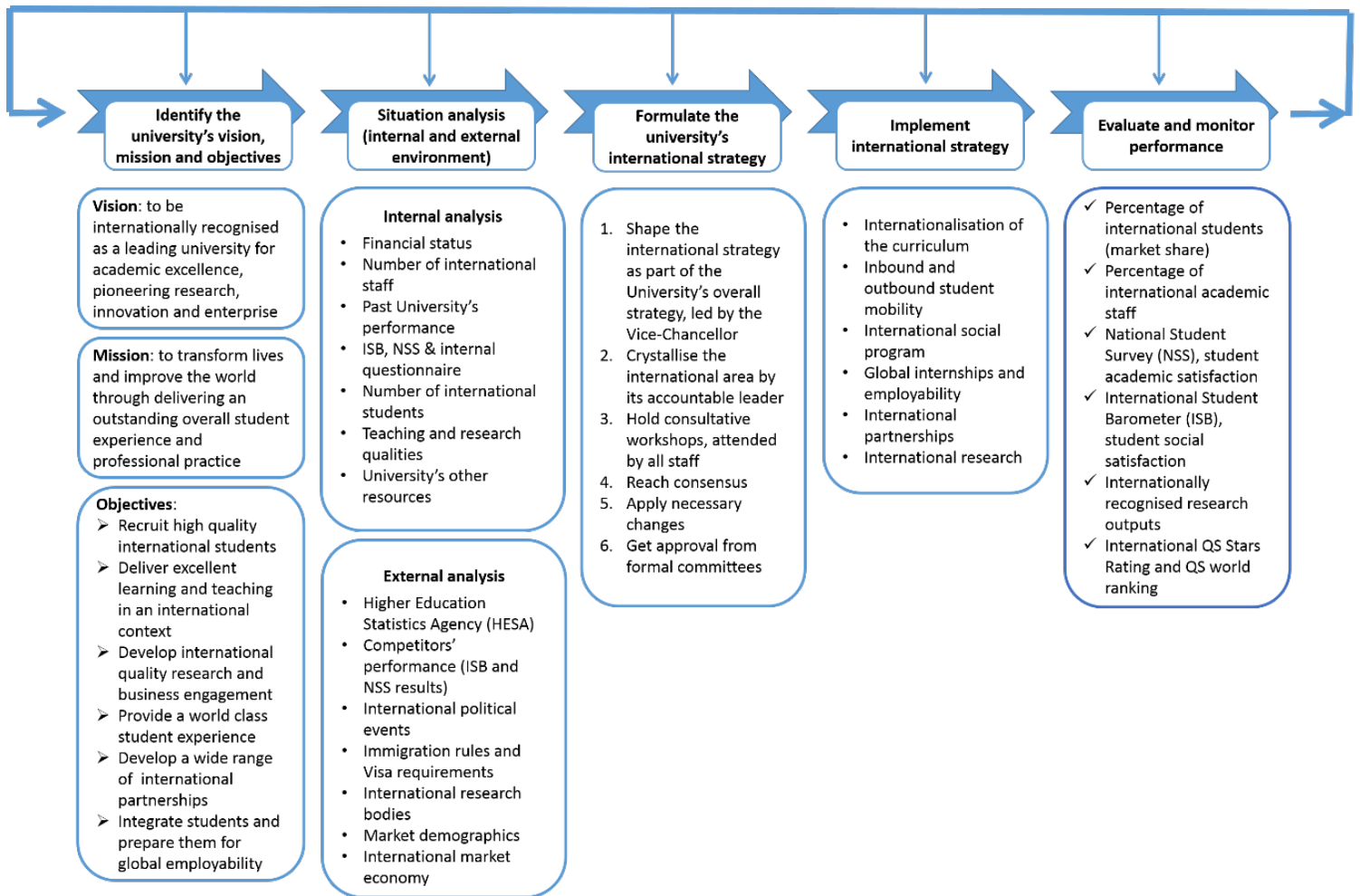
(Author's work)

Firstly, it started as a group of internationalisation initiatives which did not feature in the university's strategy at all and was controlled by operational managers. Secondly, the internationalisation practices increased and were mentioned in the strategy, but not foregrounded, and they were monitored by middle managers. Thirdly, it expanded to include more international elements both at home and abroad and became a core strategic priority which was managed by strategic managers. The diagram does not assume that each university will necessarily go through every phase in a linear fashion and, in fact, some universities might move backwards in some cases. In the case of the four universities under study, each university went through the three phases differently as discussed in section 5.2.2.

6.3.2 Finding 2: International Strategic Management Process in HEIs

The recruitment of international students is part of universities' corporate strategies, their financial strategies and their international strategies. From integrating the above discussions and linking the connections between all codes and categories resulted from this research, a comprehensive framework which summarises a holistic 'international strategic management process' in HEIs was generated (see Figure 16).

Figure 16: International strategic management process in HEIs



(Author's work)

The participating universities were found to be following the same process to formulate and implement their international strategies. Firstly, they start to define who they are and identify what they are doing and what they want to be in the future. Being recognised as a leading university for excellence in teaching and learning nationally is of considerable importance; however, achieving this at an international level is the core element of their international strategies. Universities aim to provide students with an outstanding overall experience in terms of teaching, research, and social experience that empower opportunities for personal development and prepare students to succeed in their professional and personal lives. This kind of international education transforms lives and makes a difference in the world, which is represented in universities' visions and missions. As shown in Figure 16, defining long-term objectives is the first stage of this process. International strategic objectives from the four strategies at the four participating universities were grouped together in order to provide a

broad picture of what the universities are trying to achieve to compete internationally as follows:

- Increase the University's popularity as a destination of choice for the best talented students worldwide, achieve sustainable enrolment growth in their international student recruitment, and enhance the diversity of their student populations
- Inspire high expectations through delivering teaching and facilitating learning of the highest quality that is informed by research and aligned more closely to practice which maximises engagement, progress and achievement
- Develop international high quality research portfolios that is translated into economic and social benefits and strengthen university-business engagement and enterprise that lead to an optimal matching of business need with university strength
- Provide a world class student experience and inter-cultural opportunities which meet the needs of current and prospective international students and other diverse stakeholders. This will also help to attract new international students since alumni act as ambassadors and they transfer their university's positive experience overseas.
- Commit to establish and sustain strong partnerships with a wide and varied range of leading organisations which share common research, teaching, and business interests across the globe in order to develop self-sustaining strategic alliances that are mutually beneficial
- Integrate students, both home and international students, and promote intercultural understanding to be culturally agile; and help students to build in employability skills that better prepares them to be 'work-ready' in a global context.

After setting the university's vision, mission and long-term objectives, a SWOT analysis is carried out to identify the key internal and external environmental factors which can affect the development and implementation of the international strategy. To be precise, it is worth mentioning that the factors stated in this section do not cover all the factors that need to be considered in a SWOT analysis prior to formulating the strategy; however, these were the only ones mentioned by participants during the interviews. Internal environment incorporates factors such as the university's financial position in order to consider the diversification of income streams and international tuition fees, number of current international students and

the university's capacity to recruit new students, number of international staff relative to the number of international students, teaching and research qualities, results from the ISB, NSS and internal questionnaires to measure the academic and social student satisfaction, and lastly but not least, the university's performance and progress over previous strategic periods through numbers, charts, lines and graphs. On the other hand, the external environment covers aspects such as data from the HESA about the number of international students coming from each country to study in the UK, their demographics, and their subject areas, competitors' performance through national/international rankings and survey results such as ISB and NSS, influential research bodies to identify international funding and collaborative opportunities, government immigration rules and student visa requirements in order to make the visa application process as smooth as possible and to maintain the university's Highly Trusted Sponsor (HTS) status to sponsor new Tier 4 students, international political events and international market economy which can affect the relations with certain countries and, thus, affect the number of international students coming from these countries and their experience after arrival.

After these two important steps, universities start to formulate the international strategy (the strategy formulation process at each university is described in-detail in section 5.2.1). Although it looks like a top-down process since the VC and senior managers set the strategic direction and the main elements of the strategy, it is also a bottom-up process since all the staff participated in the consultative sessions held at each university and contribute to the whole strategy so that they can see how their job/role contributes to the university's strategy and feel they are a part of something bigger. Once they reach a consensus and the strategy gets the approval from the formal committees, they move to the next step which is to implement the strategy. At the implementation stage, all the internationalisation practices which were discussed in section 6.2.1 are executed; these practices range from having international exchange and study abroad programmes, internationalised curriculum, diversified student body, international social events and activities, global internships and employability, and research collaborations with international institutions. At this stage, changing the organisational structure and culture to meet the new strategy was an important step at the participating universities. By giving internationalisation a higher profile and moving it from an operational function to a strategic level, universities had to change their organisational structure and alter their culture to fit with the new strategy and the new roles assigned (section 6.2.5).

The last step is to evaluate the university's performance compared to the intended strategy. Each participating university has its own set of KPIs which are grouped in section 6.2.3. In order to optimise results and avoid having a gap between the strategy formulation and strategy implementation phases, universities break down these KPIs into Performance Indicators and detect them on a trajectory to visually assess performance on an annual basis which provide milestones towards meeting those KPIs. As shown in Figure 16, evaluating and monitoring the university's performance is a continuous process. This means that universities can identify and modify any detected flaw early which saves time, money and effort. This helps universities to refine their operations and prioritization of objectives whenever needed to accommodate the on-going business environment changes.

It is worth mentioning that the international strategic management processes is an iterative and continuous process. In other words, it might be necessary to re-examine each step at any stage. For example, university's mission might be re-examined after analysing internal and external environments.

In the literature, there is no clear picture about how managers formulate the international strategies of universities and about the process they go through. However, the 'strategic management process', in general, is widely discussed (David, 2009; Thompson and Martin, 2010; Robbins and Coulter, 2010; Rothaermel, 2012), as presented in section 3.2. A comparison of the 'strategic management process' (see Figure 3) with a grounded model of the 'international strategic management process' (see Figure 16) shows that both of them pursue the same steps of: identifying vision and mission, studying internal and external environment, forming strategy, executing strategy and evaluating results, in exactly the same sequence. However, this research reveals, in detail, what happens within each of these steps in the international HE context, UK universities in particular. Although most of the literature about internationalisation is concerned about the international practices performed at an operational level (Mosneaga and Agergaard, 2012; Ardakani, Yarmohammadian, Abari and Fathi, 2011; Magne, 2015; Miller, 2014), few papers have highlighted the universities' problem of failing to implement the international strategy as planned due to poor communication or poor resource allocation (Warwick and Moogan, 2013). By contrast, participating universities in this research emphasized their eagerness to understand the university's current situation via a SWOT analysis prior to formulating the new strategy. This is to match the university's strengths and weaknesses with the environmental opportunities and threats. They also highlighted the importance of communicating the strategy to all staff

members so that it gets support at all levels. All of these actions helped them to achieve their strategic objectives effectively in the previous strategic periods.

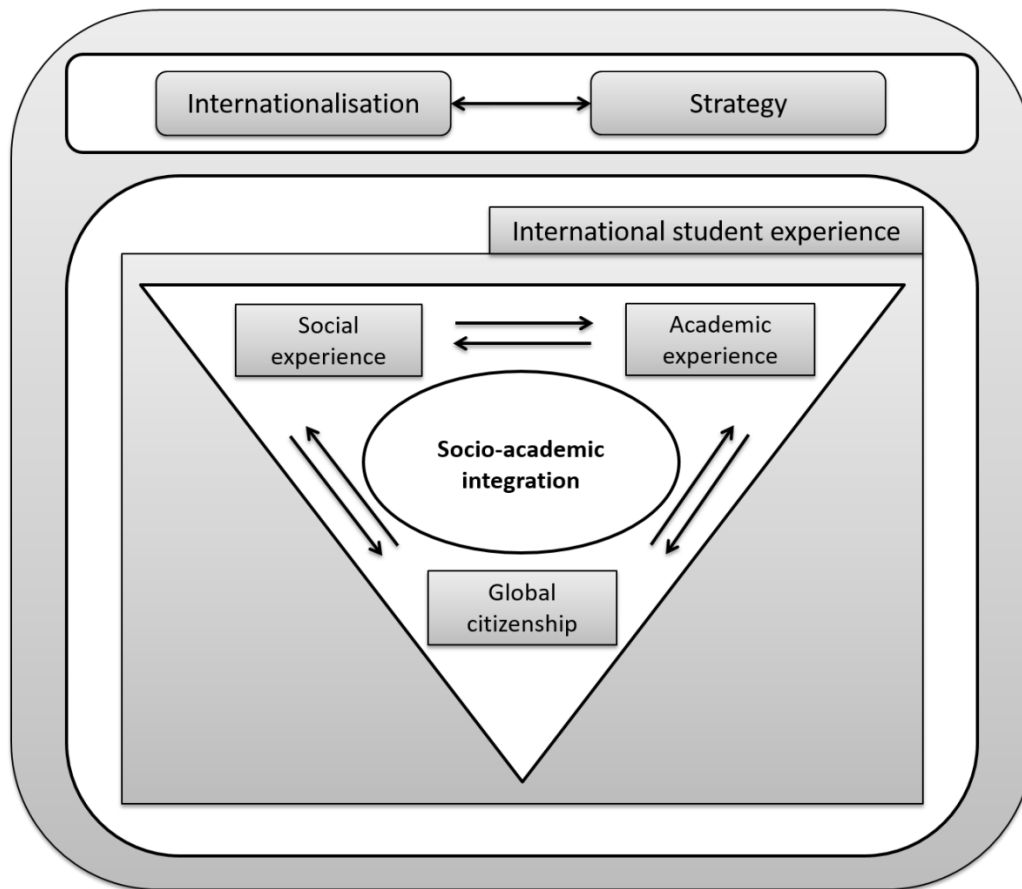
6.3.3 Finding 3: Achieving Socio-Academic Integration

From the data analysis, it was possible to construct a comprehensive definition to describe the term ‘international student experience’ by considering the various factors which influence the experience of students in the HE system. The research proposes the following definition:

The intangible qualities that students acquire during their international education journey; the journey starts from the first point of contact with the university and develops through the process of applying, enrolling, attending classes, challenging language and cultural difficulties, enjoying university social life, studying, developing language and personal skills, making new international friends, engaging with local community, getting internships, graduating, getting a suitable job... and it never ends as its influence lasts forever.

This definition highlights the different facets of an international student experience. Instead of using specific words such as ‘academic and social experiences’ to describe the concept, it takes readers through the whole journey so that they get to understand the importance of combining the academic and social experiences and their positive consequences. Furthermore, the definition also integrates both the international experience of home and international students, which is rarely to be emphasised in the literature. After analysing the key aspects of the universities’ strategies, the conceptual model below (see Figure 17) was drawn to demonstrate the importance of embedding the international student social experience within the context of the university’s international strategy. This is due to the increasing awareness of the stressors faced by most of the international students mentioned in section 6.2.2. The model suggests a balanced triangular relationship between an academic experience, global citizenship, and social experience. Combining the three elements is a key to smooth the student’s transition process and achieve socio-academic integration.

Figure 17: Balancing international student experience



(Author's work)

It was found that the concept of 'international student experience' is frequently used in the academic literature (Schweisfurth and Gu, 2009; Taylor and Scurry, 2011; Harvey, 2014); however, its definition remains elusive. Thus, this study is believed to be the first attempt to articulate a definition of the 'international student experience'. With regards to the international social experience, several studies have found that many international students suffer from homesickness, difficulties in building new social networks, adaptation and communication problems (Khawaja and Stallman, 2011; Smith and Khawaja, 2011; Yu, et al., 2014) and even mental health issues (Hunt and Eisenberg, 2010; MacAskill, 2013); with greater need for social support than their home colleagues. Emerging research relates this to the cultural distance, lack of English Language proficiency and academic performance deficit which act as barriers preventing international students from joining social activities on campus and making friends from different nationalities (Ramachandran, 2011; Smith and Khawaja, 2011; Sawir, et al., 2012). Being unsatisfied socially can produce academic stress

(Li, Chen and Duanmu, 2010; Mushtaq and Khan, 2012) because scholars who cross national borders need strong social connections to support their studies. Conversely, failure to attain high academic performance drives students to emphasise their academic goals and spend less time on socialising which negatively affects their social satisfaction and leads to the same issues associated with an unbalanced life (Andrade, 2006). Thus, combining both would enhance the adjustment process and achieve socio-academic integration (Watson, 2013). Practically, it was found that the number of universities who participated in the ISB increased every year from 11 universities in 2005 to 115 universities in 2015, which indicates the increasing importance of the student social experience as a key component of the international student experience and the universities' strategies. However, perhaps the literature undervalues the importance of an international student social experience being embedded within the strategic management processes in HE and there is a substantial gap in the scholarly understanding of the overall strategic priorities in HEIs. Hence, this study is believed to be the first attempt to provide an alternative perspective on the scope of universities' international strategy in HE.

6.4 Chapter Summary and Conclusions

This chapter has provided an interpretation and analysis of the empirical findings from interview data and document review. The GTM was utilised to demonstrate patterns and themes useful in understanding the broader discourses concerning the phenomenon under study: the international strategy of HEIs. The first part of the chapter has presented the GT categories and the relationships between them which have resulted in the development of three findings, which have been presented and discussed in the second part. Grounding the theory generated in the relevant literature shows that the models developed in this study are explicable. The findings presented and discussed in this chapter elaborate the evolution of the internationalisation function, the international strategic management process of UK HEIs and the broad meaning of the international student experience in HE. The research found that universities have deliberate international strategies; however, the internationalisation function has evolved through three developmental phases to move from the operational level to the strategic level, while explaining the main changes that occur in each phase (Finding 1). Moreover, it has revealed the main steps that the universities follow as part of their international strategic management process and has identified actions taken in each of these steps in terms of internationalisation strategic objectives, different factors considered for

the SWOT analysis, procedures for strategy formulation, actions taken for strategy implementation, and KPIs for the evaluation of success (Finding 2). Finally, it has shown that an international student experience represents both the academic and social experiences to achieve socio-academic integration, and that it is very important to be embedded within a university's international strategy (Finding 3).

Chapter 7: Conclusions

7.1 Introduction

The previous chapter dealt with analysis and interpretation of the data obtained by interviews and document review. This final chapter demonstrates how the aims and objectives, which were introduced in Chapter 1, have been addressed throughout the thesis. It outlines the key findings from the empirical investigation and highlights the significance of the study and its contribution to knowledge. Moreover, it reveals the limitations encountered in conducting the study and provides recommendations for future research.

7.2 Overview of the Study

The purpose of the study was to explore international strategies at UK HEIs and to examine the importance of the international student social experience as a strategic priority in universities. Internationalisation and the international student social experience have been extensively discussed in the literature; however, there is little attention given to them at a strategic level. This gap in knowledge was the key motivation of this study. This qualitative study is exploratory, descriptive and contextual in nature. The researcher adopted a GT approach to achieve the objectives of the study. Semi-structured, qualitative, open interviews were conducted with senior staff members at four different universities in the UK who were purposively selected as participants. The interviews were conducted in English, tape-recorded and then transcribed. Codes and categories that emerged from the data were analysed and ethical considerations were respected. The two main research questions to be answered were:

- How are international strategies being formed in UK HEIs? And where do they lie on Mintzberg's deliberate/emergent continuum?
- To what extent is the international student social experience being embedded within the context of strategic management in HE?

7.3 Summary of the Key Findings

Three key research findings were emerged from the data:

Firstly, although the results show that senior managers at the participating universities plan for their international strategies deliberately at the beginning of each strategic period, internationalisation emerged and went through three developmental phases over consecutive strategic periods; each university at its own unique rate. The internationalisation function was primarily concerned with international student recruitment and the management of a number of internationalisation activities. However, the internationalisation expanded to include strategic initiatives such as international partnerships and global employability due to the globalization. In practice, the internationalisation responsibilities moved from operational management to strategic management with the intent of moving universities forward.

Secondly, the study revealed that universities follow an on-going 5-step process to formulate and implement their international strategies effectively and it identified the key elements of each step. It starts with defining the university's vision, mission and its long-term objectives to be internationally recognised for academic excellence, pioneering research, innovation and enterprise (each university uses its own terms). Then, the university analyses all internal and external factors that could affect the strategy. Internal factors include, but are not limited to, the university's financial status, the number of its international staff, the university's past performance, ISB, NSS and internal survey results, number of enrolled international students, and teaching and research qualities, while external factors include statistics from HESA, competitors' performance (using ISB and NSS results), international political events, immigration rules and visa requirements, international research bodies, market demographics, and international market economy among other factors. Afterwards, it formulates the international strategy with a contribution from all staff members which gets the approval from formal committees before execution. Next, it implements the strategy and applies its internationalisation practices such as an internationalised curriculum, international student mobility, international social programme, global internships and employability, international partnerships, and international research. At the end of each strategic period, the university evaluates its performance with regards to the strategy and takes corrective actions if required; however, each university has an annual assessment to ensure the effective achievement of its goals over time.

Thirdly, the study confirmed that universities are becoming aware that the international student experience extends beyond internationalising the classroom-based experience to cover the social aspects as well. It is about gaining an overall international experience and it is not just about international students. This has been driven initially by increasing student mobility and changing student demands. Today, it is not only academic knowledge that helps to generate global citizens, but more importantly the skills and competencies that develop over years and shape a graduate's personality. Thus, universities run social programmes to integrate home and international students and to improve their university experience. This used to be dealt with at an operational level; however, it is becoming a strategic objective to achieve socio-academic integration.

7.4 Research Contributions

The main two objectives of this research are to examine internationalisation strategies in HEIs and to explore the international student social experience as a core part of a university's strategy. Even though many researchers have worked on the internationalisation of HE and the importance of an international student social experience as discussed in the literature chapters, their link to the university's strategy is still unclear. This research took this one step further to fill the gap in knowledge by making the first attempt to reach an understanding about the nature of international strategies in HEIs and the international student social experience as a strategic priority in HE.

7.4.1 Theoretical Contribution

The thesis has developed a substantive theory grounded in empirical data from interviews and document review. This theory is specific to the area of internationalisation in HE and strategic management. It explains how universities manage their international strategies and it establishes links between concepts such as the student social experience and internationalisation. This research forms a basis for understanding international strategic management in HEIs – a topic which is rarely discussed in the literature. The main theoretical contributions are:

- The research declares the importance of considering the 'time frame' as a key aspect to determine the type of strategy in addition to the other aspects stated by Mintzberg

and Waters (1985). It also develops a useful model (see Figure 15) that illustrates the evolution of the internationalisation function in HEIs and how it develops from a number of initiatives to a strategic objective. It reveals the changes that take place in each of the three developmental phases of internationalising universities.

- The study provides a framework for the successful planning and implementation of international strategies at universities. It describes the ‘international strategic management process in HEIs’ and identifies the steps which are necessary to realise international strategies as intended (see Figure 16). This helped to develop a full picture of the content of the internationalisation strategy and the process by which it is being formulated and implemented. The study specified the key elements that underlie each of these steps in terms of strategic objectives, factors considered for SWOT analysis, procedures for strategy formulation, internationalisation practices employed for strategy implementation, and KPIs for the evaluation of success.
- The study introduces a helpful definition for an ‘international student experience’, which summarises the different factors affecting students’ overall experience in HEIs. It also provides a model (see Figure 17) that maps the relationship between the internationalisation, HEIs’ strategies and international student social experience within the UK. It confirms clearly the importance of the international student social experience to be embedded within a university’s international strategy. It also indicates that a university’s efforts to balance the international student experience with regard to delivering an excellent academic knowledge, providing an outstanding social life and preparing students to be global citizens achieves socio-academic integration.

7.4.2 Practical Contribution

The results of this study can contribute to potential strategic changes towards internationalisation in universities in practice.

- The ‘Evolution of internationalisation’ model, Figure 15, can be considered as a roadmap for HEIs while they are going through the progression of internationalisation from an operational level to a strategic level. Via this model, universities can identify where they are, where they want to be and what actions need

to be taken to drive the internationalisation process forward for an increasingly globalised and competitive future.

- HEIs which seek to be internationalised can use the framework of the ‘International strategic management process’, Figure 16, as a guideline to set a comprehensive international strategy and to ensure the effective implementation of this strategy. Other universities which already have an international strategy can still use this framework to alter certain aspects of their international strategies in the future.
- This research helps strategic decision makers in HEIs to understand the importance of the international student social experience and to consider the idea of balancing the international student experience, as demonstrated in Figure 17, when designing their international strategies.

7.4.3 Methodological Contribution

- From conducting this research, Grounded Theory Methodology proved well suited to the development of a comprehensive understanding of complex social phenomenon particularly that are newly addressed in the literature for the reason that it is detailed, systematic and flexible.

7.5 Research Limitations

Certain limitations were identified in the study as follows:

Firstly, the findings described above are centred on the data collected from a small sample size of four case studies. Therefore, it cannot be generalised as it may or may not reflect what happens across a large population. However, statistical generalisability was not the aim of this study. Qualitative research methods were chosen to get intensive data to explain the phenomenon of internationalisation strategy in HE. Although the consideration of a large number of cases would need a long time for analysis, it is one of the possible ways forward in future research.

Secondly, asking critical questions about the universities’ strategies and strategic decisions could affect how respondents answer the questions. Bias in this case could be created by an

unwillingness to provide honest answers or the willingness to hide some of the facts depending on the respondents' desirability.

Finally, the nature of the GTM relies on the researcher as the main data collection instrument for the interviews and analysis of the data which could affect the validity of the findings. To decrease the risk of researcher bias, grounded theory data collection and data analysis approaches were followed, strategies such as reflexivity and bracketing were employed and ethical principles were considered.

7.6 Further Research

In the light of the limitations identified and the findings of the study, this research has the potential to be expanded in the following ways:

- To conduct similar study with a larger sample that represents mainstream UK universities since the current study provides the basis to understand the phenomenon of internationalisation strategy in HEIs. Further large-scale research will help generalise the findings and get a big picture view of the subject.
- To link the subject area of internationalisation in HE to the strategic change management field in terms of studying how universities manage 'internationalisation' as strategic change.
- To investigate the gap between international strategy formulation and implementation in universities
- To compile statistics from surveys that observe international and home students' feedback about their university experience, such as the ISB and NSS, in order to measure the effectiveness of internationalisation strategies and their impact on students' experience.
- To conduct further research about the benefits of 'internationalisation strategy' at the national level
- To investigate the facilities provided by UK government to support and promote internationalisation of HE and the challenges facing HEIs with an international agenda

7.7 Conclusion

A summary of the research project has been presented in this chapter. The objectives of the research study have been achieved. The Grounded Theory methodology has proved to be effective in addressing the overall aim of the study. The research contributed to an understanding of the nature of the internationalisation strategy in UK universities. Finally, there are proposals for further research in the UK HE sector.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Explanatory Statement for Interviewees

Explanatory Statement

Participant's Name

Participant's Title/Position

Participant's Organisation

Dear _____, (Participant's name)

Project Title: Evolution of the Internationalisation Strategies in UK Universities

My name is Samar Soliman and I am conducting research for a Master's thesis under the supervision of

Professor John Anchor, Head of Strategy, Marketing and Economics - The Business School
Professor David Taylor, PVC (International)

The aim of this project is to examine the internationalisation strategies in UK higher education institutions and to examine the importance of the international student social experience as a strategic priority in higher education.

Due to the increasing number of international students in the UK higher education, policy makers are becoming fully aware of the significance of internationalisation and acculturalisation. A huge number of researchers addressed 'internationalisation' in terms of its practices and implications at an operational level. However, it is not addressed from a strategic level. Besides, in terms of the universities' strategic priorities, researchers tend to focus their attention on the strategic management of perceived core functions including the academic experience, finance, resource allocation, and research funding. Yet, there is no clear picture about the role of the international student social experience in international education. Therefore, analysing the international strategy formation process and evaluating the outcomes of plan-

ning strategically for international student social experience can help to identify best practice for a first class international student experience.

Given that your role at the University is crucial to both the University's international strategy and international student experience, your sights and views are greatly valued. This interview will take about two hours of your time. With your permission, I will audiotape and take notes during the interview. The recording will be used for transcription purposes only (which will be sent to you for verification) in order to achieve high level of accuracy throughout collecting and analysing data. If you choose not to be audiotaped, I will take notes instead. If you agree to being audiotaped, I can turn off the recorder at your request whenever you feel uncomfortable at any time during the interview.

Yours sincerely,

Samar Soliman
BA (Hons) Business Studies
Postgraduate Researcher
University of Huddersfield
(U1274693@hud.ac.uk)

Appendix 2: Informed Consent Form for Interviewees

Consent Form – _____ (Participant's name)

Project Title: Evolution of the Internationalisation Strategies in UK Universities

I volunteer to participate and be interviewed in the research project specified above, conducted by MSc student Samar Soliman, and I understand that I can withdraw at any stage without being penalised in any way.

I have read the explanatory statement which I keep for my records and I understand the research is designed to examine the internationalization strategies in UK universities and the extent to which they embed the international student social experience within their strategic priorities.

- I agree to allow the interview to be audio-taped and I understand that I will be given a transcript of data for my approval before it included in the write up of the research.
- I agree to make myself available for a further interview if required.

Participant's name:

Signature:

Date:

Appendix 3: Interview Form

Interview Form

Participant's Name: _____

Participant's Position: _____

Date: _____ **Time:** _____ **Location:** _____

Interview questions:

1. Please will you describe your role at the University?
2. What are the University's vision and mission?
3. What are the University's strategic priorities? Do they have similar weight? In what sense?
4. What is the University's long-term strategy? Is it broken-down into small short-term strategies? Please elaborate.
5. Please will you illustrate the organizational structure and specify who is involved in the strategy formation process?
6. How do the University's overall strategy and the international strategy in particular form and what data does the University rely on while setting the strategy?
7. Once the strategy is in place, how would the University adjust to any unplanned (internal/external) event?

8. What are the assessment criteria used to evaluate the success of strategy? Does this happen on a regular basis?
9. What actions have been taken to ensure internationalization of the University's strategy?
10. Over years, can you mention any action which has emerged over time and then became part of the University's new strategy?
11. How would you define 'student experience' and 'international student experience'?
12. How does the University measure international student satisfaction? And how would their level of satisfaction and feedback affect the current and prospective strategy?
13. In your opinion, what are the stressors international students face when studying abroad, if any?
14. What are the factors contributing to these stressors?
15. In your opinion, what would be the consequences of such stressors?
16. How does the University manage to respond to cultural diversity on campus and to integrate international students?

Appendix 4: Supplementary Questions

<p>1. During the following strategic periods,</p>	<p>The main person responsible for the planning and execution of your international agenda was:</p>
<p align="center">Current strategic period (2010-2015)</p>	<p> <input type="radio"/> No one <input type="radio"/> Director of International <input type="radio"/> Head of International Office <input type="radio"/> Dean of International Office <input type="radio"/> Pro-Vice Chancellor International/Partnership <input type="radio"/> Someone else </p> <p>If someone else, please specify:</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 20px; width: 100%;"></div>
<p align="center">Previous strategic period (2005-2010)</p>	<p> <input type="radio"/> No one <input type="radio"/> Director of International <input type="radio"/> Head of International Office <input type="radio"/> Dean of International Office <input type="radio"/> Pro-Vice Chancellor International/Partnership <input type="radio"/> Someone else </p> <p>If someone else, please specify:</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 20px; width: 100%;"></div>
<p align="center">Previous strategic period (2000-2005)</p>	<p> <input type="radio"/> No one <input type="radio"/> Director of International <input type="radio"/> Head of International Office <input type="radio"/> Dean of International Office <input type="radio"/> Pro-Vice Chancellor International/Partnership <input type="radio"/> Someone else </p> <p>If someone else, please specify:</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 20px; width: 100%;"></div>

<p>2. During the following strategic period,</p>	<p>How did “internationalisation” feature in the University Strategies?</p>
<p>Current strategic period (2010-2015)</p>	<p> <input type="radio"/> Not at all <input type="radio"/> Mentioned <input type="radio"/> Foregrounded and important </p> <p>Please feel free to elaborate:</p> <div data-bbox="748 660 1270 842" style="border: 1px solid black; height: 80px; width: 100%;"></div>
<p>Previous strategic period (2005-2010)</p>	<p> <input type="radio"/> Not at all <input type="radio"/> Mentioned <input type="radio"/> Foregrounded and important </p> <p>Please feel free to elaborate:</p> <div data-bbox="748 1209 1270 1391" style="border: 1px solid black; height: 80px; width: 100%;"></div>
<p>Previous strategic period (2000-2005)</p>	<p> <input type="radio"/> Not at all <input type="radio"/> Mentioned <input type="radio"/> Foregrounded and important </p> <p>Please feel free to elaborate:</p> <div data-bbox="748 1758 1270 1939" style="border: 1px solid black; height: 80px; width: 100%;"></div>

3. During the following strategic period,	What were the main elements of the international agenda?
<p style="text-align: center;">Current strategic period (2010-2015)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Recruiting international students <input type="checkbox"/> International student experience <input type="checkbox"/> International research partnerships <input type="checkbox"/> Outward student mobility <input type="checkbox"/> Internationalisation of courses <p>Please feel free to add any other elements:</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 30px; width: 100%;"></div>
<p style="text-align: center;">Previous strategic period (2005-2010)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Recruiting international students <input type="checkbox"/> International student experience <input type="checkbox"/> International research partnerships <input type="checkbox"/> Outward student mobility <input type="checkbox"/> Internationalisation of courses <p>Please feel free to add any other elements:</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 30px; width: 100%;"></div>
<p style="text-align: center;">Previous strategic period (2000-2005)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Recruiting international students <input type="checkbox"/> International student experience <input type="checkbox"/> International research partnerships <input type="checkbox"/> Outward student mobility <input type="checkbox"/> Internationalisation of courses <p>Please feel free to add any other elements:</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 30px; width: 100%;"></div>

Appendix 5: Statement of Verification of Transcript

Approval of Interview Transcription Data

This is to certify that I have been provided with a copy of the transcript of the data concerning my interview for my approval before it is included in the write-up of the research.

I certify that I had read the transcript and approved its use for the following research: “An Analysis of the Internationalisation Strategy in UK Higher Education Institutions: a Grounded Theory Study”

Participant’s name:

Signature:

Date: