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Subversion to the Economic: The Reconceptualization of Higher Education

Phillip Buck

A thesis submitted to the University of Huddersfield in
partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Masters of Politics

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Introduction

Within the United Kingdom there has been a general policy arc from underlying principles of universal provision, state responsibility and wider universal social benefit towards privatisation, emphasis on the expansion and freeing of markets, and the placing of the individual as the core political subject with a concomitant development in parallel with attitudes and policy presentations of citizenship. This policy arc has been significant in reflecting the fundamental ideological shift within the political institutions of the United Kingdom, this political development has seen evolution of political discourse and policy to reflect it. In order to fully understand this phenomenon and political paradigm shift, higher education represents a smaller scale case example to analyse this phenomenon, the shift in policy reflected through discursive changes and evolutions that underpin it, allowing to draw insight from the examples in higher education for further understanding of the wider political paradigm shift and arc in political policy and discourse towards market oriented principles.

The United Kingdom is currently engaged in a widespread political discussion and debate about the future of higher education, the Augar Review, commissioned by Theresa May in 2018, was given the emphasis to ensure 'Driving up quality, increasing choice and ensuring value for money' from higher education (Department of Education, 2018). The upcoming Augar Review and the current debate on the future of higher education, especially questions and conceptualisations of 'value for money', 'choice' and 'quality' derive from discursive evolutions around higher education from the past fifty years.

There has been a distinct shift in conceptualisations of the student subject, of higher education itself and the way funding is presented, and to fully understand the Augar Review and future direction of higher education, insight must be had into the history of the discursive and rhetorical evolution and development surrounding these concepts. The Augar Review is the end of a long political and discursive process of change to higher education, therefore it is crucial to fully understand the path and direction that higher education has already taken in order to accurately chart and understand the future developments to this process, to identify the trends and common themes that have already contributed to and reflected changes towards the sector. To understand the manners of which that higher education has changed and shall continue to change, the language used to conceptualise, reflect wider political context and shift higher education must be investigated.

This thesis shall therefore chart a genealogical critical discourse analysis of higher education, in its relationships to students, the conceptualisation of higher education, and how the question of funding of higher education is presented and answered. This shall be done through the analysis of discursive and rhetorical devices used within the Robbins (1963), Dearing (1997) and Browne (2010) reviews, and charting exactly how these devices have evolved. A postmodernist lens of analysis shall be utilised to determine exactly how these devices have influenced and reflected wider contextual political shifts, these three reports represent distinctive politically prominent documentation that are crucial for understanding wider conceptual and political shifts around the higher education sector. Specifically, this thesis shall determine how the conceptualisation of higher education has shifted to one that is marketised as a product to be sold, with elements of 'competition' and the economic benefits of education being emphasised in later documentation, with the consequent manners of which the reports use this basis to shift the funding of burden onto students.

A discourse being a particular way of talking about or understanding the world (Jørgensen & Phillips,

p. 1, 2002), a series of structures and patterns related to a particular domain of social life, therefore political discourse is the language and rhetoric within the political sphere. The methodological approach of discourse analysis is to analyse the formal political representations of this social relation and conceptualisation of students and higher education (Van Dijk, 1993, 1985), and exactly which rhetorical and discursive devices are utilised to emphasise specific concepts, trends and issues, as well as to minimise and disregard others.

In a wider contextual political context, the neoliberal revolution enacted by the Thatcher and Reagan governments (Harvey, 2005) saw the liberalisation of markets, reduction of taxation and the role of the state in the economy, and emphasised the primacy of the individual. Political systems and structures then saw a concomitant subjection 'economically based practices and values', notions of citizenship shifted to conceptualise its values, rights and responsibilities to the rule of 'achieving private goods and welfares (Roche, 1987). The subversion of political structures and concepts to the economic. This political and cultural development is expected to be reflected in the discursive and rhetorical devices utilised in the Dearing and Browne Reviews, highlighting wider contextual political and ideological evolutions. Higher education provides a unique environment for analytical observation of how exactly political discourse has shifted alongside these political developments. The context of wider shifts in higher education policy being reflecting and influenced by these core 3 sources warranted them as the primary focal points of analysis, therefore this thesis shall explore the rhetorical and discursive devices utilised in these reports, charting the development of policy and formalised political attitudes towards students and higher education, and specifically the shifts and evolutions in the conceptualisations of them. A core feature of this political shift and process was the emphasis placed upon the application of market principles to traditionally state organised non-market features to boost efficiency

The primary research questions and aims are:

1. Identify what format the conceptualisation of higher education and students has changed to
2. Chart the evolution of their conceptualisation
3. How have discursive and rhetorical devices reflected wider political phenomenon and evolutions, and continue this process

The wider objectives are:

- Determine what are the exact discursive and rhetorical tools utilised that both reflect wider consensus and political trends, and contribute to the evolution and shifts in the perceptions and conceptualisations of higher education and the student subject.
- Identify how the language itself has changed and evolved, what the language has changed to.

Student debt, through the burdening of funds being placed upon them, and the student relation to higher education has been selected as the topic in this research. This choice allows analysis of attitudes and perceptions of higher education and students, analysing the language towards higher education and political culture of presenting students as consumers, this allows further

understanding of how the student subject in its relationship to wider society and higher education has progressively altered and evolved in parallel with the increased burdening of student debt. Changes to higher education has prompted events of political charge, in which higher education funding and students became a focal point of public debate, the student protests in 2010 against tuition fees being one such example of how controversial policy sparks public debate more widely (Lewis, Vasagar & Watt, 2010), with widespread engagement with students and their relation to debt. The widespread discussion of the various crucial events of shifts in attitude and policy changes for student debt, especially its relation to wider questions of funding of higher education with consequential shifts in the students relationship to higher education, provides an effective means and source of analysis.

The sources of funding for higher education have increasingly shifted towards placing the burden upon the student, through a focus upon fees and the individual as the source of funding as opposed to wider society viewing education as a social good. This has derived from wider influences and narratives around higher education in its progressive decline from part of a social contract to an individualised experience to provide competitiveness both individually and nationally. Consequently the perception of the student as the individualised subject as opposed to a part of the social contract is tied to wider shifts in higher education, whether there has been any reconstruction of the subject of the student, especially the student consumer as its own social category (Naidoo and Williams, 2015) therefore becomes a crucial factor to analyse. Naidoo and Williams also cite the shift in perception of Higher Education from it being a social good towards it being a private good benefitting the individuals who utilise it, who then contribute to its costs later, a shift from the social compact between higher education and wider society as the ideological source of funding and regulation, towards showing public value as the national competitive edge and the individual marketability within a global marketplace (Naidoo and Williams, 2015). The democratic principle of public services being available to all, as opposed to those who can afford it, was surrendered on Higher Education (Scott, 1998), as such rhetoric around the higher education sector places it as less of a public service but a tool for individual enhancement and the sharpening of national competitive edge. Given the contemporary theoretical background surrounding the rise of the popularity of the 'knowledge economy', especially given the prevalent political discussion of the necessity of an educated workforce to the national economy. Scott (1998) highlights that this process of individualisation is intrinsically at odds with education as a social good, especially given the perception of the crucial need for an educated workforce for a 'modern' economy and so consequently there must be some form of ideological background pushing the individualisation and commodification of higher education when the discourses surrounding higher education are in fact conflicting. The relationship of students towards higher education, especially in their specific relationship to the question of funding becomes crucial to the analysis of overarching narratives due to the increasing burden placed upon students, especially through debt as the primary mechanism of funding.

Funding was determined by the Dearing Report (1997) to be at the core of the crisis that commissioned the Dearing Report, the recurring theme of shifts of policy surrounding Higher Education derives from funding, as such the tracing of rhetoric around funding, especially whereupon the funding burden is placed, is crucial to understanding the manner of which narratives will shift and develop further. Previous changes and shifts in higher education policy, such as the progressive transformation of polytechnic institutions to more formalised universities in an effort to secure greater funding (Barr and Crawford), culminated in an underfunded higher education sector, with real funding decreasing by 30% in the period 1990-96, neither the universities nor the students could fund themselves.

The project will utilise qualitative form of research in the form of critical discourse analysis. There will not be significant quantitative or qualitative data (questionnaires, interviews) handling as the research is an engagement with existing literature and political documentation within the public domain.

The authors and speakers to be analysed produce themes and representations, identified as 'interpretive repertoires' (Gilbert and Mulkay, 1984, cited in Alasturri et al, 2012), around student finance and student debt, these will be subject to analysis in order to determine imprints from society and reproductions of dominance (Van Dijk, 1993). The sources to be analysed are those within the public domain, specifically documentation, legislation and rhetoric from political elites. Legislation, government commissions and reports, party conference speeches, wider media commentary surrounding policy and debates on student finance. Metaphors, allusions, imagery and references that populate wider sociological and cultural phenomenon will permeate into these documents (Alasuutari, P., Bickman, L., & Brannen, J. 2012), which the methodology will deliberately identify and analyse to pinpoint how the relationships and conceptualisations have changed and evolved, as well as what discursive and rhetorical tools have been utilised.

The literature review shall then investigate surrounding existing academic debates, to understand recurring themes within existing literature and academic inquiry, as well as determining the gaps in existing research and therefore from both these points this thesis can deduce the research questions necessary for the purposes of understanding the linguistic and conceptual evolutions of higher education and students.

This thesis shall then undertake consideration into which methodological tools are best suited for the purposes of investigating and analysing rhetorical and discursive tools utilised in these core three reports, as well as providing context as to why the three sources selected are most apt for charting the evolution of higher education discourse. Concluding that a critical discourse analysis with a postmodernist lens is most apt for this process of investigation.

The thesis shall then undertake the primary data analysis, engaging in a critical discourse analysis of the Robbins (1963), Dearing (1997) and Browne Reviews (2010), allowing a detailed understanding of what format higher education and students has changed to, exactly how that conceptualisation has evolved and developed over time, and what discursive and rhetorical devices have been utilised to facilitate this change. This means of analysis shall identify the recurring trends and themes in discursive and rhetorical devices utilised, creating a genealogical documentation of how these conceptualisations have evolved over time and how that evolution has been facilitated. Allowing a comprehensive understanding of discursive developments.

Finally leading into the conclusion in which this thesis shall answer the core research questions and therefore what this means for the Augar review and the likely discursive trends for higher education.

Literature Review

This project shall undertake an analysis of existing literature surrounding the core themes, those themes being debt and higher education, specifically student debt and the other being that of power and elites. Especially on how debt reproduces itself and is tied to the state, how political elites formulate policy based on shifting socio-political trends, especially through changes to language and rhetoric towards debt. This project shall undertake an analysis of existing literature surrounding the core theme of higher education, how the relationships and conceptualisations of higher education have developed within modern politics, the increasing involvement and prominence of individual burden and debt, and the marketization of higher education. Especially how these developments and evolutions have derived from wider contextual political events, and represent a reflection and reification of evolving political consensus.

Fundamentally higher education has shifted in its internal dynamics, relationships and conceptualisations towards structures and perceptions that are distinctly market oriented in scope and purpose, the process of individualisation and commoditisation of higher education and the student as its own subject has culminated in a popular viewing of higher education as a mechanism and tool to ensure individual success with the associated obligation to fund it as an individual, rather than a perception of it as a social and public good. A visible and noticeable ideological process and shift has occurred and continues to occur within higher education, with political voices championing the values of globalisation that aligns with policy shifts that alter higher education to a different relation between student and university and student and society. An ideological process to be represented by this thesis as neoliberal.

- Debt and neoliberalism

Neoliberalism is specifically defined by Harvey (2005) as a political shift designed to curb the power of labour, one that originated in the late 1970s and led to the Thatcher-Reagan political success of the 1980s which radically redesigned their respective political consensus, curbing the power of labour, lifting restrictions on market mechanisms and reducing taxation, creating a political and economic climate favourable to industry and business. Harvey (2010) argues that the crises of stagflation during the 1970s was argued by Thatcher and Reagan to originate in an overly oppressive labour force, coupled with both overly restrictive regulations and excessive taxation restricting the capabilities of business and industry to innovate and reinvest which resulted in a sluggish economy burdened with inflation.

Neoliberalism shall be discussed within this thesis as an ideological perspective and continual political shift, one that emphasises the value of market mechanisms and individual choice. Neoliberalism represents an economic and socio-political shift wherein dominant political consensus largely values market mechanisms, a deregulated economy with low taxation. A key process of neoliberalisation was the deregulation of the financial industry and by extension releasing the restraints of Keynesian policy on credit. Culminating in the more widespread use of credit cards, alongside a societal culture shift and a more relaxed attitude to the normalisation of daily use of credit. Credit entrenches itself, credit increasingly became a means of which to supplement the historically low wages of the working class (Soederberg, 2014) which helped offset and circumvent the capitalist contradiction that arose of working class with less spending power but a requirement to consume and spend (Harvey, 2005). The question of debt is crucial for understanding the shift in burdens of funding towards students in order to fully understand if how the relationship of student

to higher education has altered, how it represents a consumer/investor relationship and conceptualisation, or a creditor-debtor relation, or a mixture of all of these.

Debt exists as a human construct, a socially upheld relation between people, one that is underpinned and underwritten by a myriad of intersecting social cues and societal features, economic, interpersonal, hierarchical power and religion (Atwood, 2007). All of these features together normalise debt and credit as a social relation in both formal and informal formats, through its legalisation within the state and by creditor organisations and the informal through rhetoric and consensus of belief that legitimises it further, religion being one such structure that crosses both the formal and informal in an historical context. Atwood makes reference to how throughout history, the victors on conflicts and wars wrote the dominant laws thereafter 'enshrining inequality by justifying hierarchical social formations with themselves on the top'

David Graeber's theory (2011) revolves around the idea of credit as a power relationship that exists in a state of cyclical flux between the creditor and debtor consistently exerting pressures against the other to twist the relationship more to their favour. This is done through a wide variety of exertions of power. For the purposes of reproducing and renewing the position of the creditor, state exertions of power as well as softer forms of power such as language and culture exist to normalise credit as a social relation with its own self-contained rules and conventions. Graeber argues that language subtly shifts over history, with religious texts, folklore, culture as well as structures of the state normalising the creditor-debtor relation, particularly through tying this relation to concepts of obligation and honour, with associated concepts of the good debtor and the bad debtor, the latter facing both societal and cultural animosity, projected as dishonourable by failing to adhere to their obligations. Concepts of underlying balancing principles to the universe are one such feature of this, such as karmic recompense dispensed on those that fail to adhere to what is owed to their creditor. The core of Graeber's work is the identification of an underlying thread of power between creditor and debtor, an antagonistic relationship between the two, and posits that the manners of which creditors seek to hold the balance of power in their favour manifest themselves in a multitude of forms, most notably through both hard and soft forms of power. The exertion of state power through laws and regulations that entrench the positions and rights of the creditor, and the emergence of cultural phenomenon that normalises the relationship between creditor and debtor.

Graeber's work echoes Atwood's identifications of the origins of credit through the formation of social hierarchies, highlighting the symbiotic relationship between early militaristic expansionism and the rise of both economic currencies and credit, especially levies imposed upon the defeated parties, a causality that began to continually reproduce and normalise credit as a concept through early human history.

Together Graeber and Atwood recognise the emerging theme of language as a core component of the normalisation of the creditor-debtor relation, particularly in circumstances of which in retrospect look to heavily favour the creditor and to emphasise 'obligation' on the part of the debtor, a discursive and rhetorical device used to justify the imposition of this relation. The shifts in higher education towards placing the burden of funding upon the student as the individual subject will utilise multiple discursive and rhetorical devices for the purposes of justifying this, the use of 'obligation' for the creditor-debtor relationship will be a rhetorical device to look for when analysing discursive trends around the student subject on the questions of funding.

Soederberg (2014) begins at the point that neoliberalism is its own continual process, which pursues economic and political consensus that increasingly favour the rights of creditors. Soederberg argues

that there has been a popularisation and instalment of neoliberal ideology within the USA and the consequential shifts in the political and legal structures of power, there has been an expansive liberalisation and deregulation of the financial sector that has culminated in a substantial increase in consumer, sovereign, corporate and student debt. The process of neoliberalisation has culminated in a culture that normalises credit, however there is a growing counterbalance to this, particularly from the religious right, that has questioned the morality of a more normalised and liberal attitude towards credit, as mentioned by Harvey there is a constant cycle of pressures exerting in discursive conflicts to reformat this relationship of credit. Student debt is now widely perceived to be a necessary step towards entering higher education, with higher education viewed as a tool for the individual that exists as a potential stepping stone towards economic 'success' and entry to a level of employment that necessitates that level of education. A core theme of Soederbergs work is specifically how the state functions in relation to credit and debt, loose networks of economic elites push the rights of creditors through lobbying communities and party donations, culminating in a political environment within the US in which legislation increasingly favours creditors. This crosses multiple avenues of credit such as student debt, standard credit card debt and external debt to other countries through trade deals such as Mexico under the Trans-Pacific Partnership.

Soederberg argues that the state is one of the primary vehicles for the advancement of the broader interests of creditors, specifically within larger credit companies and banks with the finance sector, through an effective lobbying program and party donations. Graebers work focusses upon what he identifies as myriad of social and political phenomenon that continually contribute on multiple parallel societal levels to the process of reproducing and renewing the creditor and debtor social relationship, one that historically moves back and forth between one making gains over the other. The primary thread and dominant theme within the literature analysed within this section is the myriad of forms of power, the multitude of economic, political, social, discursive and cultural phenomenon, that contribute to the reproduction of the creditor to debtor relationship.

- Higher education

The concept of what is a university, what are the underlying ideological threads within these institutions, is a crucial first step to then understanding a student and their relationship to higher education. A discursive conflict exists within higher education, one between a conceptualisation of higher education as a focal point of education and learning for the purposes of social and civic enrichment balanced with economic necessities, the other being the representation of universities as a crucial process and function within a globalised economy for production of an educated workforce within a globally competitive environment. Underlying the debates of higher education, is a perception that higher education, and the relation of the student towards it is increasingly shifting in a direction favouring individualism and the commoditisation of the sector.

The core theme of Wolf's work (2017) is that there has been a shift within higher education towards a more privately funded system, and that this is negative for the profession in general for its long term sustainability and quality of life for students and staff. Wolf states that since the 1990s and the recommendations of the Dearing Report, discussion has increasingly shifted towards an economic format, in both higher and wider education. School reform was primarily driven by low exam success in comparison to international peers and the associated economic concerns, primarily the 'development of human capital' and the interlinked signalling of desirability to employers. The shift in research funds under the Thatcher/Major governments towards select institutions and 'quality related funding' consequently contributed towards the conversion of more and more polytechnic

institutions to formalised universities, with more institutions competing against one another for students. Wolf states that this process has culminated in England becoming one of the most 'privately funded' higher education sectors worldwide. A myriad of factors within the sector, more students, declining sources of funding, consecutive funding crises, the Vice Chancellor 'revolt' of Autumn 1995, wider education concerns culminated in political reform to the sources of higher education funding specifically towards tuition fee loan systems.

Wolf argues that this has been a negative process for higher education. The core theme being the actions of the Thatcher/Major governments shifted higher education into a format and structure that met the values of the free market and enterprise, shifts to private sources of funding. A shift towards a globalised higher education has led to the inclusion of international competitiveness as a crucial factor in how higher education should perform, it has culminated in a reconceptualization of the priorities of the industry.

Naidoo and Williams (2015) speak of the 'student' as its own self-contained social category, they argue that an extension and variation of the student subject has been constructed, the 'student consumer', a social category altering the nature, purpose and values of higher education. They identify the origins of the student consumer in the USA during the 1970s, with a parallel rise in tuition fees, students rather than the institutions themselves gained funding. With the burden of cost now placed upon students, students in their own self-perception and views towards higher education have shifted, cementing the subject of the 'student consumer' and a consequential commoditised higher education sector. Naidoo and Williams agree with Wolf's point on how there has been a shift from higher education perceived as a collective public good to higher education as a private good benefitting the individual. The core thread running through Naidoo and Williams work, is how there exists a trend in perceptions and viewpoints towards higher education, that further directs the sector to the consolidation of the subject of the 'student consumer'.

The literature analysed here focus upon a cultural and economic shift within higher education, a multifaceted alteration to the core structures of the sector, in both its formal institutional structures through policy decisions and the culture and attitudes of staff and students within the sector. The literature places an emphasis upon a perceived interconnected cyclical relationship between policy shifts to the sector and the social and cultural relationships and attitudes of those within and external to higher education.

Lunt (2008) focusses on identifying a perceived conflict between social inclusion and market principles of choice within higher education. A push for greater student numbers during the time period of 1987-97 as well as the abolition of the binary divide between polytechnic institutions and formal universities culminated in funding crises. Lunt expands upon and more intricately defines the origins of the student consumer as a social relation, identifying the relation as a reflection of the themes of New Labour policy of 'modernisation of public services', universities now compete for students who are seen as customers using 'consumerist levers' (Naidoo and Jamieson, 2005, cited in Lunt, 2008). The crux of Lunt's work here emphasises a social and cultural shift within higher education, a shift that Lunt argues originates from specific choices of policy within higher education. The emphasis by New Labour and the Thatcher/Major governments on public services being provided by the private sector in order to drive up standards through competition, efficiency and market forces is a force seen here identified by Lunt, the reconceptualization of students into consumers, and university courses to be offered as a form of product in order to force competition for students as consumers and investors, is a crucial process in reformatting the internalised relationships and perceptions of higher education into one that has market values embedded into

the core political structures of the industry.

The Dearing Report was commissioned after a 'hectic decade of underfunded expansion government put a freeze on undergraduates', prompting an overhaul of governance for higher education, marking a political shift away from the principles of the Nolan Report (Peter Scott, 1998). Scott argues that the report surrenders a key democratic principle that underpinned the Nolan Report, that public services should be available to those who can benefit from it, not those who can pay. This underlying criticism, that of higher education representing a societal boon, in which the students and wider society as a whole benefit from higher education as a publicly funded institution and prevailing attitudes endorsing this, runs as a continuous thread through Scott's critique of the Dearing Report, and its perceived departure from this. A balance of civic and economic benefit from higher education as previously referenced, the distinction is made to identify that from the Dearing Report onwards there was a discursive and rhetorical shift that reconceptualised higher education into an economic relationship. The argument is made that education should be provided to those who benefit most from it, both individually and to society, as opposed to who can pay for it. However criticism can be made to this claim as the Dearing Report did indeed still hold onto the principle of all those who are able to partake and benefit from higher education would be able to, that principle was not openly surrendered, however the burden of funding was reoriented to be placed upon the student, within that context, and the perception of cost could students potentially perceive higher education as something to be paid for. However the emerging theme of Lunt, Naidoo and Williams argues that the presentation of higher education as a product and the shift of the student subject into a consumer and investor is evidence that the perception of cost was indeed reformatted to one that had to be paid for by the individual. Graduate employability are argued to be one such aspect, degrees are 'sold' as a form of access to an economic sector (Scott, 1998), a tool existing to provide employability at a later date. With graduate employability and ties to industry emphasised in more recent years in promotional material to potential students, with industry ratings for universities and the respective Schools within being best for employability in their respective sectors .

These developments in Dearing, in the emphasis of education to the wellbeing of the wider economy, were intrinsically tied to wider contextual developments and evolutions in political consensus and discourse. The work of Driver and Martell (1998. P, 32) states that the Labour Party, specifically the leadership of Tony Blair and New Labour shifted emphasis of political and economic policy away from traditional social democratic labour party policy of nationalization through the replacement of Clause IV, and rejection of Keynesian economic policy saw a concomitant shift towards managing education and training as the 'supply side' of economic planning. This shift represented a reaction to the political and electoral success of the Thatcher and Major governments. The wider shifts in capital fluidity and capacity to rehome itself based on domestic economic circumstances as identified in Harvey (2005) saw a reaction by the Labour Party to emphasise a 'well-trained, flexible workforce which can attract investment and provide the basis for skills-based growth' and claiming that 'In a post-industrial economy it is human capital and skills which are at the basis of economic success' (Driver and Martell, 1998. P,33). This is a theme at the core of New Labour according to Driver and Martell, the concept of a post-industrial economy as a hard and rigid reality that must be adapted to through emphasising the skills of labour and retraining the workforce when necessary, higher education was to be the core component of that, mirroring the concept of the 'Learning Society' forwarded by the Dearing Report. Both New Labour and the Dearing Report matched this emerging theme explained by Driver and Martell, and so understanding the Dearing Report and how it presents this changing economic and political landscape will be

crucial for understanding exactly how political paradigm shifts like this occur and are justified discursively.

The theme of debt is the varying forms of power that it is applied through, most notably language, customs, culture and the state. The question of burden, the conceptualisation of obligation, coupled with the policy shifts of higher education to create a principle of funding in which the student now 'owes' and is 'obligated' to repay based on their education, means the conceptualisations and representations of debt, as well as how it functions as a social relationship and reproduces itself is crucial for an understanding in how discursive tools and usage of concepts such as 'obligation' will be used to underpin shifts in higher education policy and discourse. The draw of analysing literature on debt is the manner of which it reproduces itself and discursively evolves, in understanding this we can better understand the shift from student grant model towards one in which the burden of funding is placed on students. The dominant themes raised by Atwood, Graeber and Soederberg has been discursive constructions and conceptualisations of both the debtor, the relationship between creditor and debtor, and the conceptualisation and emphasis on obligation is crucial to an understanding of how these structures and relationships evolve, therefore from these themes the core research question of identifying 'what format the conceptualisation of higher education and students has changed to', is a crucial first step to understanding and charting how higher education has developed.

The question of students and the relationship to higher education is one that has been distinctly charted to take the trajectory towards an individualistic relationship towards higher education, with it acting as a tool of enhancement for employability or for the 'student experience', with the means of funding it moved away from the state and associated collective responsibility of society and the burden is placed on the students themselves, an arc from collective responsibility to an individual. The dynamic and conceptualisation of higher education has shifted towards one that institutionally has formatted itself both ideologically and structurally as one that meets market oriented values, such as competition and the emphasis on their necessity to a healthy economy. The primary theme being that these evolutions of conceptualisation of higher education has culminated in a higher education sector in which the burden of funding is placed students and that the student has emphasis placed on them as individual market actors, these discursive and conceptual developments and evolutions reflect wider contextual political developments. The literature on higher education contains a core theme of a cultural and structural shift within the sector, one that argues that there has been a shift towards a greater emphasis upon the individual experience, individual benefits to university education and a shift in the financial burden towards being placed upon students themselves individually. The financial burden now exists as the burden being placed upon the student individually but rather than the student paying in full at first for access they receive a loan in order to pay the costs of their education determined by the university (set within state guidelines and limits). The literature reviewed has an emergent theme of a cultural shift of the 'student' as its own cultural and social construct changing significantly and developing its own popularised identity in tandem with these shifts within the sector towards an individualised model. The gap in the literature here has been exactly how discursive and rhetorical devices reflected wider political phenomenon and evolutions, and how they continue this process, to fully understand how higher education has developed and evolved from Robbins principles to today requires understanding the discursive and rhetorical devices used to reflect, reproduce and reify this development and evolution. Understanding the devices and manners used to convey and convincingly persuade shifts in higher education, understanding of these devices is crucial, and will provide insight to future researchers who seek to understand the Augar Review.

As such this work shall identify the best methodological practices and tools to analyse these political and social phenomenon and how these phenomenon are tied and interlinked with each other.

Methodology

This section shall now establish the methodological form the research is to be conducted, identifying the methodological analytical tools most relevant and useful for unpicking the themes identified within the literature review for determining the manners of which the credit-debtor relation is intertwined with student debt and whether the relationship has changed within the period that is to be analysed. The literature review identified core recurring themes on the question of debt in the manner of which discursive presentation and conceptualisation was a crucial component factor in the manners of which it has influenced state policy and direction, that consequently coming to questions of student debt and the manners of which higher education has fundamentally altered, using the themes on debt as an example, looking for interpretive repertoires, rhetorical and discursive devices such as the emphasis and conceptualisation of 'obligation' is crucial for understanding discursive developments and how they translate into political policy and consensus. In addition the literature review identified a cultural shift within higher education itself and the views of the wider public and political institutions in how they perceive and regard higher education externally, due to the manners of which the conceptualisation of higher education has evolved and the idealised values placed upon it through policy changes and discursive evolutions. The other core emerging theme is that the identity of the student towards higher education, as well as the means of funding within higher education has changed substantially over the past thirty years, with the means of funding shifting towards a greater burden being placed upon the student, largely sourced through student loans funded by the state. The methodology that is to be chosen and utilised in this project is to seek to bridge the gap between these emerging themes and identify whether there are any links between these themes and specifically how these links emerge and reinforce one another. First is to be a designation of whether quantitative or qualitative methodology shall be used.

Quantitative analysis is unsuitable for this thesis as the form of methodological research necessary for the purposes of determining the subtleties of language shifts within institutions and chart the processes of developing and entrenching consensus. Quantitative data can identify numerical trends in specific words or phrases, charting consistencies in language used and therefore establishing which discursive trends exist. However the intent of this thesis is to identify underlying ideological and narrative trends existent within discourse, specifically their similarities to the creditor-debtor relationship and if the shifts of funding sourcing within higher education has intended to alter the dynamic between student and higher education more closely to the creditor-debtor relationship. Whilst quantitative analysis can identify wider trends and note words and phrases traditionally situated or tied to the creditor-debtor relation, a fundamental understanding of underlying narrative trends and intent, through detailed qualitative analysis, is best suited for the intents of this thesis.

Within qualitative analysis, for the purposes of identifying discursive intent from political structures to the shaping of the relationship of the student towards higher education, discourse analysis is uniquely suited for this purpose. Discourse analysis conceptually is designed to analyse, identify and unpick the subtle underlying intentions and behaviours within language between people and institutions, allowing the researcher to more wholly understand precisely how socioeconomic, political and cultural phenomenon are perceived by individuals and wider society (Machin, D. Mayr, A. 2012) . Discourse analysis is tied to a myriad of academic disciplines and as such takes different formats based upon the respective discipline.

Within the field there are variations of discourse analysis that are designed for either a macro or micro level of discourse analysis. An analysis of individual discussion and everyday language or analysis on institutions themselves, be it corporations, public discussion, the political sphere. For this dissertation an analysis of discourse at the micro level would allow an understanding of student debt and individual interpretations of the relationship of students to higher education, however an understanding at the micro level only goes so far. The micro level of discourse analysis allows the researcher to understand the subtleties behind language that highlights an individual's relation to the analysed discourse at hand, for this dissertation to truly succeed in underpinning precisely how the relationship between student and higher education has changed and how it has begun to lean more towards a creditor-debtor style power relationship is through research of discourse at a macro level. The literature review contained analysis that focussed upon institutional shifts that largely emerged through either slow cultural shifts within higher education itself or through legislation that fundamentally altered the relationship between students and higher education, both of these forms of change has changed how students and higher education relate to one another and the discourse surrounding these requires understanding to fully analyse how this relationship has changed. Discourse at the macro level has become part of a cycle of change, changes in language contributes to a changing relationship and the changing relationship alters the language within discourse. As such this project shall practice a methodological analysis focussed upon the macro level, upon institutional discourse and wider commentary within the public political sphere.

Discourse analysis works to understand how a specific form of the world and society is made to seem immutable, a secure system and without flaws, how are these systems constructed socially and how they are managed and reproduced, focussing on rhetoric. Discourse analysis identifies general patterns within dialogue allowing insight into institutions, their systems and their communications. In so doing this allows the analysis into deeply entrenched and normalised political and socio-economic systems. Van Dijk (2008) defines critical discourse analysis as an 'academic movement of scholars specifically interested in the analysis of fundamental social problems, such as the discursive reproduction of illegitimate domination', the aim is to:

'critically analyse the details of discursive domination for example, by means of the use of specific nominalizations – by specific elite authors, and in specific contexts – that may be used to express and convey a distorted view of social events, namely the obfuscation of the problematic role of powerful actors in society'

Therefore determining underlying intent and obfuscation of power through the analysis of discourse is the central aim critical discourse analysis.

Critical discourse analysis is focussed upon 'the way that power is enacted or resisted in discourse' (Parker, p19. 2014) and whilst there is no universally agreed upon theoretical starting point that defines power, critical discourse analysis seeks to discern the manners of which power manifests itself within society, hence the political leanings of the researcher is to made clear from the onset so as to ensure that the reader can identify in what way the researcher is to critique discourse and to also understand the researchers interpretation of power from the beginning. Critical discourse analysis allows engagement with dominant cultural and political norms of linguistics and common discourse, challenging contemporary consensus to unpick how society reproduces and subconsciously enforces this through language.

For the purposes of analysing how institutional discourse from the political sphere has shaped the relationship between the student subject and higher education itself, critical discourse analysis acts

as a methodological tool at the macro level to discern political motivations and leanings contained within the language used. The theme emerging from analysis of the power relationship of debt within the literature review determined that this relationship is enacted and reproduced within a myriad of forms, most notably being formal institutional power structures alongside in parallel cultural phenomenon, especially language and discourse surrounding debt. Critical discourse analysis allows for the analysis of language and discourse surrounding debt with the intention of unpicking underlying dynamics of power and how it is enacted and reproduced.

Critical discourse analysis requires analysis from a theoretical position on the part of the author, to engage with the analysed texts and speeches on the terms of the underlying theory. Coming from a specific theoretical background and analysis allows discourse to be engaged with upon theoretical terms, and whilst it will not come to a comprehensive conclusion involving multiple theoretical positions, allows a succinct and detailed analysis from a particular theoretical position.

There are a variety of complexities within naturally occurring talk and recorded texts (Silverman, 2006), Austin (Cited in Silverman: 223) shows how phrases and utterances beget and perform actions, committing speakers to consequences. One theme that is particularly emphasised here is the rhetorical or argumentative organization of talk and texts; claims and versions are constructed to undermine alternatives (Potter, 2004: 203, cited in Silverman, 2006), specific arguments and positions are supplemented through the processes of undermining alternatives, thus normalising the position of the author or speaker. As such discourse analysis allows a theoretical unravelling of the underlying positions and socio-political leanings of the author and the ideological outcome they seek. One such example of how discourse analysis unravels underlying positions is through analysing the constructions of 'participants' and the manner of which they view the world we exist in, especially how they perceive themselves within it, and how others perceive them too. The way the world and subjective versions of the world, societal, political systems, cultural phenomenon and inner subjective perspectives of these institutions are produced within both themselves and language through various discourses.

Interpretive repertoires are a subsection of analysis within research into discourse analysis, analysis by Potter (1996) came to this conclusion: 'Interpretive repertoires are systematically related sets of terms that are often used with stylistic and grammatical coherence and often organised around one or more central metaphors' These metaphors are a crucial linguistic construct for the creation and reproduction of specific narratives, that operates at both an institutional and an individual level. Inconsistencies in language and discourse have been identified as 'difference between relatively internal consistent, bounded language units', labelled interpretive repertoires (Potter, 1996), discourses can vary but remain internally consistent within a framework of similar themes. It establishes the fact that analysis of discourse is dependent upon the identification of concurrent and parallel trends in addition to phrases and particular words used, it is the ideas conveyed through language that can be linked between multiple discourses.

As evidenced in the research cited (Silverman, 2006), perceptions of parenthood determines how the individual interviewed composes themselves, especially when external perceptions of their individual parenting styles are seen to be judged. At this individual and personal level narratives determine how an individual views themselves and how they are viewed by others. Language and discourse can be subconsciously altered to shape the way the people and groups around us view our motivations and actions. Societal perceptions and discourses are situated in specific contexts, often tied to the contemporary political and socio economic environments the individual experiences. The

crucial point derived from insight and research into interpretive repertoires is the manners of which language is changed and shaped both consciously and subconsciously, to determine how the individual or group involved seeks to be perceived by others. For the analysis of the relationship of student to higher education, awareness of interpretive repertoires and a process of identifying them within the texts to be analysed is a crucial factor in determining underlying intent and how the student subject is viewed. The framework of analysis provided by critical discourse analysis requires a selection of sources to interpret and investigate, to engage with and critique the discourse and language within, an active understanding of interpretive repertoires within this thesis will be utilised in order to identify interpretive repertoires as a methodological sub analysis within the critical discourse analysis in the sources to be analysed.

The Robbins Report shall be the starting source to be analysed, establishing the contemporary attitudes towards higher education, the uses towards society and the individual perceived, and the intended objectives of higher education accepted by legislators within the political sphere. From thereon we shall analyse the key focal pieces of legislation and reports that acted as the key mechanisms of change within the sector so as to establish whether or not there have been any changes within the overall goals and functions set out by society for higher education and whether attitudes towards the

The Robbins Report, Dearing Report and Browne Review are the crucial documents that established higher education policy as it is now, it is a culmination of existing perceptions surrounding Higher Education, with the additions to correct and improve upon the flaws and the struggles faced by the industry. They are selected in particular due to being the precursors to sweeping reforms of higher education, reformatting the relationship of student to higher education and to the state. Wider media commentary and political discourse around policy derived from the findings of these reports are to be analysed.

A critical discourse analysis, shall therefore begin from the Robbins Report (1963), across the Dearing Report and Browne Review to present day, specifically analysing these texts and charting the differences in language. This is to determine how the relationship between student and higher education has changed specifically and how that relationship is perceived within these key reports. Doing this will establish a genealogy of the relationship of student to higher education and how that relationship has changed materially and perceptually, allowing insight into how the introduction of tuition fees has altered this relationship. A genealogy, such as the one undertaken by Nietzsche in charting how contemporary morality had formed and originated, particularly Christian values (Nietzsche. 1994), will allow a time oriented comparison between specific discourses from different decades that charted the direction of education policy. Setting the analysis out as a genealogy allows a more long term analysis and to identify subtle linguistic changes within political discourse, allowing reflection to wider political context and the ideological and narrative underpinnings of the time. This will ensure the aims of the thesis to analyse, identify and critique underlying narratives of power within higher education are met, hence this thesis shall utilise a genealogical format for the purposes of analysis.

For clear understanding of the relationship between higher education and the student, specifically through the means of funding of higher education, to what extent the burden is placed upon the

student and how the conceptualisation of these subjects has altered and evolved, it is necessary to study the discourse surrounding this relationship and the political contexts of which these have arisen. The genealogical framework to be utilised acts as a methodological foundation for critical discourse analysis to investigate, what is required is a critical theoretical perspective of which to analyse and critique discourse surrounding higher education, specifically the means of funding and the burden it is placed upon.

This thesis shall therefore utilise a poststructuralist lens in order to determine the varying power differentials within the relationship between student and higher education as applied through the state and general political discourse. The subtleties in language alongside the shifts in broad overall societal goals and expectations placed upon higher education as an institution and the role of which students are shaped to fill within contemporary society. Using this ideological perspective in order to investigate and critique discourse surrounding Higher Education allows insight into any number of varying power relationships within the sector, this is due to poststructuralism being uniquely specialised in investigating multiple varying and conflicting narratives, with these narratives seeking a contest of and for power. Poststructuralist theory notes how narratives and ideological positions compete with varying forms of power, rather than a singular source or implementation of power, such as class, economics or the state, the focus on multiple competing narratives allow analysis of more holistic sources and influences to prevailing narratives.

The postmodernist approach of critique to discourse shall allow detailed insight into the varying narratives underpinning the discourse to be analysed, culminating in the understanding of which ideological perspectives underpin discourse within the political sphere on higher education, and how these perspectives have changed and developed. This also allows insight into the subtleties of change in language when these narratives remain consistent, and to understand wider changes in ideological underpinnings towards higher education when these narratives change. Adhering to the genealogical approach to be undertaken by this thesis shall ensure that subtle differences over time shall be identified, and can be tied into wider ideological and political context when available, to better determine and differentiate between long term gradual shifts and changes based off of party policy and wider shifts in political consensus.

A postmodernist lens of analysis is to be utilised in comparison to other critical perspectives such as Marxian analysis, due to the fact that Marxian analysis focusses upon a class basis of analysis which, whilst providing useful analysis for critiques of credit, falters as a theoretical perspective when it comes to higher education due to the fact that, even though there are class dynamics at play within higher education, there is not an explicit class relationship between higher education or the state towards students themselves, and that students are drawn from multiple economic classes. There also lacks a response and framework to provide a distinct understanding of the critiquing myriad competing narratives over the conceptualisation of the student subject and higher education. Postmodernist analysis on the other hand allows investigation into multiple competing narratives and to discern ideological underpinnings towards discourse and political policy, not being restricted to an explicit class basis of analysis, this synergises with the genealogical format as the thesis shall cross multiple governments with differing political consensus. Due to this, a postmodernist lens is much more appropriate for investigating underlying origins of discourse in higher education, ensuring the methodological capability to determine if there is a creditor-debtor dynamic that has influenced the relationship of students to higher education in contemporary society.

Postmodernism is specialised in critique, emerging loosely from criticisms of structuralism and 19th and 20th century modernity (Merquior, J, G. 1991), specifically to education an example of which was

Derrida's critique of Rousseau's interpretation of education (Boyne, R. 2001). This theoretical heritage in a tendency towards critique places postmodernism as suitable to a theoretical framework to be utilised in this thesis. Postmodernist academics have continued in a focus upon education, especially within contemporary 20th and 21st century higher educational practices (Cobbs, 2002), this manifests in two parts of teaching, the former being in specialist topics and skills, most notably tied to wider economical needs and focusses, such as the purposes of Polytechnics in the UK originally existing with the designed purpose to teach skills required by the industrial sector (Shattock, Chapter 4, 2012). The latter being in formal higher education reproducing and internalising the values of the respective society of which higher education exists within, the example Cobbs (2002) raises is within US society, and how higher education was to produce a conceptualised personification of the ideal American citizen, as well as future American leaders, ones that had to internalise the practices, ideals and values of American culture. This has then further altered within recent years towards a more market oriented narrative, with a focus upon enabling students to function and perform well within the free market, paralleling similar themes identified within the literature review. Due to the consistency with themes identified within this thesis already, postmodernist analysis allows an insight into higher education matching the analytical orientation that this thesis was to pursue in that its modes of analysis and critique align with the themes already identified as consistent within academic literature on higher education already. Postmodernist thinkers have analysed education already for identifying underlying narratives and identities that influence higher education, this method of analysis and perspective provides a framework of analytical and reference and an ideological basis of which to fundamentally critique political discourse within England.

As raised earlier in this section, utilising the postmodernist approach as an analytical lens and critical framework towards a genealogy of higher education discourse allows identification of long term and short term shifts in discourse, the underlying changes and applications of power to this process, culminating in an analytical framework that allows a detailed interpretation of how discourse has contributed to higher education today and the competing perspectives seeking to influence and alter it, and to see exactly how higher education has changed. Therefore, as established in this section, this dissertation shall use a postmodernist critical analysis and perspective to perform a critical discourse analysis designed to investigate discourse surrounding the relationship of students to higher education within the political sphere, and to determine to what extent there has been a fundamental reconceptualization of these subjects. This shall be set out as a genealogy for the purposes of charting long term shifts, both explicitly and subtly in language in discourse, as well as identifying the similarities and differences in policy itself and how the language within has advanced and altered in dynamic.

Critical Discourse Analysis

-Introduction

Fundamentally there has been a distinct paradigm shift throughout higher education, a wide discursive arc and evolution from the Robbins Principles emphasising state responsibility and access for all those who are able to participate, towards one that is still loyal to the principle of access to all able to participate, however the discursive interpretation and conceptualisation of higher education and students, what the benefits are alongside who benefits most from them and how that shall be paid for is what has undergone significant discursive evolution and change. Therefore the core critical discourse analysis shall consist of unpicking and analysing the rhetorical and discursive means used across the Robbins (1962), Dearing (1997) and Browne (2010) Reviews and how they reflect conceptualised changes in the perceptions of the student, higher education itself with who benefits from it most and which benefits of the sector and discursively emphasised, and finally how the sector is funded with where the burden of funding should be placed. These themes are crucially interlinked, but shall be analysed as separate themes to be critiqued discursively, therefore there may be some elements of overlap within the separate sections as the policy and discursive trends implicitly ties each of these themes together, however for the sake of analysis investigating and critiquing the changes in themes is best suited for identifying the shifts in discourse and how rhetoric is utilised to reflect changes in higher education policy and contribute to the discursive environment and consensus that establishes this.

The first source to be analysed is the Robbins Report, commissioned by the UK Government, specifically a Treasury Minute dated 8th February 1961 (Robbins, 1963. Page 1) Published in 1963. It emphasised no individual cost to the student, drawing parallels and represents a conceptual and ideological successor in principle to the Beveridge Report (1942), in that wider society collectively benefits from higher education and therefore should primarily be funded by the taxpayer and state (Shattock, 2014). Robbins recommended a series of aims that were to be equally balanced in priority, with an increase and expansion in higher education, cultivation of the general powers of the mind, transmit a common culture and standards of citizenship, instruction in skills and to maintain research in balance with teaching. The Dearing Report was commissioned by the UK Government and published in 1997. The Report made a myriad of recommendations, the most crucial being a shift away from the funding of higher education costs through grants supplied by the government to a mixed funding system wherein tuition fees paid for by loans began. This Report represented the shift in the burden of funding towards the individual student. The Browne Review was commissioned by Lord Mandelson, on behalf of the UK Government, with the scope to organise discussions on funding, to "examine the balance of contributions to universities by taxpayers, students, graduates and employers" and was published in 2010. The primary recommendations of Browne were an expansion of the framework established within Dearing, suggesting an increase in the cap on tuition fees to £9,000 per year, with the burden of funding continuing to be placed entirely upon the individual student, but by raising the threshold of income before students pay back those tuition fee loans to £21,000 per year.

The thesis shall note that the conceptualisation of higher education has reformatted in such a way to minimise and diminish civic functions of higher education, weighted towards emphasising the benefits of and to human capital. The politics of this, decision making over the manners of which higher education leans to 'private' and 'public' conceptualisations of the benefits of HEIs, is one charted by Marginson (2011), determining that there has been a distinct shift in emphasis towards human capital. Clark (1983) theorised a triangle of coordination, the three vertices represented which social group, institution or structure would hold most control over the sector, labelled as the state, market and an academic oligarchy, the latter structured as bureaucratic and managerial entities by academics themselves. Both of these theses interact and have shared perceptions of a private and public antagonism. One noted in the discourse analysis.

Clark represents his triangle of coordination as a zero sum dynamic of power, wherein one having complete control over the sector comes at the expense of others. The state and the institutions themselves have a significant proportion of power over HEI as of right now, in comparison to HEIs and their equivalents in the United States of America, the market element has significantly less power and influence over English universities. The discursive shifts noted in this thesis do not necessarily represent parallel power shift, a zero sum reorientation towards the market, but instead represent a conceptual reorientation of the component parts of institutions, the student and the HEI. This reorientation does not constitute a significant structural change, but a discursive one, where market forces are viewed more favourable and the sector is increasingly viewed through a market lens. There has not been a complete omission of the civic benefits of higher education, as indicated by the references to civic and cultural benefits in Browne and Dearing, but their prominence has diminished. The state maintains significant power in policy over HEIs and whilst they do have the freedom to determine their own exact proportions of funding and freely pursue private and third party funding for research and expansion, they are heavily dependent upon the state as an actor supplying the tuition fee loans. This thesis identifies a discursive process within these documents in regards to higher education, wherein civic elements are diminished more in favour of the human capital argument and emphasis, but have also contributed to a reconceptualization of the student subject and higher education itself that more closely resembles market actors. As Marginson (2011) covered the 'public' and 'private' dichotomy, the format of how institutions function in balance of these competing interests is usually inherently contradictory, imbalanced and a fusion of all points.

The literature review raised the themes of a higher education sector in which the relationship between student and higher education has fundamentally changed on a conceptual, ideological and formally structural level within institutions to reflect this, the discourse analysis shall recognise this trend. These three policy documents were crucial recommendations for shaping and establishing the succeeding Higher Education policy, therefore these policy documents shall be analysed as the primary sources for determining discursive shifts in higher education policy, due to the manner of which they can be analysed in a thematically chronological fashion to chart how exactly discourse has evolved, an evolution that the literature review thematic findings has suggested an implicit and sometimes explicit shift towards students primarily bearing the costs of their education.

- **Student Subject**
- Robbins Report

The first theme to be analysed is the student subject, how they are perceived in relation to higher education, their motivations for pursuing higher education and their ties to wider society. The discursive conceptualisation of students is of a privileged but small group proportionally, with a small section of Robbins (1963) emphasising the unique privilege that both students and higher education staff both have. Students specifically are stated to be privileged due to the 'exceptional opportunities provided for them by the labour of the community' (1963, page 198) and that therefore public opinion would not support the cost of higher education towards the state and taxpayer unless 'students are actuated by a corresponding sense of the obligation to work.' The successive section within Robbins, directly discussing 'The Cost of Higher Education', begins with the premise that the 'real cost of anything is what has to be foregone in order to have it,' with an emphasis that the students devote 'resources, including the potential services' provided by them that could be focussed somewhere else. The Report then continues by explicitly stating that 'students' grants are to be regarded as capital investment' (Page 200). The overall discursive thematic trend here is that the students themselves are sacrificing potential immediate income from their withdrawal from the labour market in order to study, and that wider society is withdrawing funding from other sectors in favour of higher education for the perceived future benefit to wider society. This emphasis on wider societal benefit is the key underpinning discursive thread to justify the State funding of higher education through grants. The conceptualisation of funding through grants as capital investment is one that is rhetorically flipped by Dearing and Browne later. From the emphasis on the privileged position of students through the opportunities provided by wider society, the overall benefits to UK society as whole is considered to warrant expansion of student numbers, a core key pursuit forwarded by the Robbins Report as a primary aim. The discussion of students within the Robbins Report emphasises the need for higher education to expand, for a greater increase in numbers of students proportionally. This is the crucial primary thread throughout Robbins, that 'higher education should be available for all those who are qualified by ability and attainment to pursue them and who wish to do so'. That fundamentally higher education should be available to all that are qualified to partake in it, and that there should be a consequential increase in available supply of higher education places and courses in order to secure that all who are able to involve themselves in higher education should have the capacity to do so.

- Dearing Report

Within a context of the funding pressures of the 1980s onwards, Dearing uses that basis to state that the individuals that benefit from higher education must 'bear a greater share of the costs' (Page 11), this is then followed by a consequential link that this burden of cost will lead to 'students of all ages will be increasingly discriminating investors in higher education, looking for quality, convenience, and relevance to their needs at a cost they consider affordable and justified by the probable return on their investment of time and money.' This latter statement is a further discursive shift and step of the process of marketization of higher education, the student role in this situation is to represent an investor, with university education becoming a marketable product to be sold to students for the maximum available return. A rhetorical device is utilised in presenting this process as self-evidential fact, derived from wider contemporary political trends and ideological positions that believe market competition innately drive increased quality and standards, which reflect a process of ideological

shift within discourse around higher education that reflects more marketised influences. This is the beginning of a noticeable paradigm shift in the relationship between student and higher education, it is to further alter higher education to a societal structure that further represents higher education as a structure designed for economic benefit, both at the individual and national level, the student as investor concept representing the former, and the learning society representing the latter. These processes shift the conceptual and ideological structures as well as the discursive perceptions of higher education to an increasingly marketised model. This section of Dearing has reified fundamental change of higher education, at multiple parallel levels, at the individual and national, to a service that represents a product, a product to employers of producing an educated and skilled workforce, a product to students through marketable skills and an increase in average earnings, a product to the nation through a more prosperous economy due to the product of an educated workforce to global investment and capital. These are all products that are interlinked in a marketised structure of mutual benefit through economic self interest, with the burden placed on students being placed as a positive aspect through the pressures shifting students into savvy investors looking for the best available university to them, which consequently forces an increase in quality from universities to appeal to the best available students and secure the funding they need through student numbers.

The Reports Chapter on who should pay for higher education, repeats the continual theme of the report that a 'new compact' should be drawn between students and families, the state, higher education and employers and institutions, the aforementioned Learning Society. The section then investigates who benefits most from higher education and compares that with who then provides the most funding to higher education, arguing that the individual student receives the most benefit from higher education due to the economic incentives such as access to graduate jobs and average higher earnings, then followed by the state and employers though the manners of calculating these latter categories is admitted by Dearing as difficult to quantify. The conclusion from this is that the state and employers still have a distinct interest in the funding of higher education, and that the state should continue to ensure funding to higher education but that the burden should be reoriented to the individual. Whilst this position maintains a theoretical and consistency in principle to the intentions of the Robbins report and the shared burden by society to the success of higher education, Dearing Report has altered the relationship between students and higher education. The aforementioned statement by Dearing, providing the expectation that students will be 'discriminating investors in higher education' alongside the follow on statement that costs should be deemed 'justified by the probable return on their investment of time and money' together represent an evolution and departure from language used by Robbins (Page 11). The concepts of privileged opportunity provided by the wider community has been left behind, and the concept of student grants as a capital investment from wider society has been flipped to have the student view higher education as an individual investment, to be burdened personally, rather than a societal benefit who's burden is to be shared by the taxpayer and state. The dynamic of the 'learning society' justifies this discursive evolution and alteration by stating the needs of the learning society warrants increasing numbers of students within higher education, and this consequentially means that students will have to burden a 'greater share of the costs' (Page 11). The discursive trends of the Dearing Report thus far has been to alter the dynamic of students to that as consumers or investors seeking a product, this marketised and transactional conceptualisation has led to a structural discursive reorienting of higher education. This shift is at odds with the principle of shared societal burden espoused by Robbins, the conceptualisation of the 'investment' has been flipped from the state and society collectively to the individual student and consequentially the burden is reoriented,

placed upon the student.

From Robbins to Dearing there is a clear paradigm shift in how higher education is to be structured, the values placed upon it, and the extent of which the relationship between student and higher education has changed. Apperly (2014), argues that the Dearing Report represented a theoretical and policy turning point, in which higher education began a process of restructuring to a much more commercialised model, especially with the relationship of student to higher education, through the reconceptualization of education, specifically concepts such as the knowledge based economy especially within the context of globalised economy. The section on the learning economy states as conventionally accepted fact, that 'manufacturers of goods and providers of services can locate or relocate their operations wherever in the world gives them greatest competitive advantage' and that consequentially when these economic features are fluid and can be moved at any time, the 'only stable source of competitive advantage (other than natural resources) is a nation's people' (Page 9). Following on from this, Dearing states that 'Education and training must enable people in an advanced society to compete with the best in the world' (P. 9), normalising competitive economic pressures as a lever to nudge higher education to reformat itself institutionally to better serve the needs of a learning economy. The discursive presentation of external international economic pressures and norms as reality facilitates the discursive emphasis that change has to occur, the usage of 'must' presents a contextual hard reality that must be adapted to, preceded by the presentation of the economic systems as accepted fact, with the follow-on point that a highly educated work force becomes the only stable economic device (note the emphasis of an educated workforce and higher education deriving value from economic benefit), it becomes a logical endpoint when carried through, that higher education 'must' change to fit the needs presented by the learning economy when presented this way. The learning society and knowledge economy is therefore perceived as concrete due to these rhetorical devices used by stating presenting the fluidity of capital, goods and services as an opaque economic reality, a clear economic structure and rigid reality that higher education must adapt to and meet the demands of in order to ensure increasing economic sustainability and prosperity (Apperley 2014). Higher education is presented as one of the few controllable variables by the state when the report states the 'only stable source of competitive advantage is a nation's people', making a rhetorical link that higher education and the training of skills as described in the 'learning society', therefore higher education has to alter to best meet the needs of wider economic structures to match wider economic pressures'

- Browne Review

Carrying on from Dearing, Browne represents the continuation of this process in the reorientation of how higher education is structured and the values placed upon it. The Browne review has a subsection committed to discussing 'A Changed Debate' (Page 20) that discusses how the 2006 changes that established the principle suggested in Dearing that students, as the individual beneficiary, should bear the burden of higher education costs, how this was resisted at the time, but has now become broadly accepted, citing employers, HEI and the NUS (National Union of Students). This summarises the primary premise of this thesis in acknowledging that the discursive concepts within higher education have fundamentally changed and consequently altered the relationship of student to higher education. The following arguments by Browne are a discursive and theoretical development of these concepts, citing OECD studies comparing the individual and wider societal benefits that indicate that the benefits are most visibly weighted in economic terms towards the former, stating that the benefits for individuals are 'on average, over 50% higher than the public benefits' (P.21). The second argument being that 'higher education is neither compulsory nor

universal' and therefore 'it is reasonable to ask those who gain private benefits from higher education to help fund it rather than rely solely on public funds collected through taxation from people who may not have participated in higher education themselves'. The emphasis is placed upon individual benefit diminishing the civic and collective benefits to society put forward by Robbins, the principle of student grants perceived as a 'capital investment' (1963. P, 200), the quantification of private benefits of higher education being higher than public benefits not only diminishes social and civic benefits, but consequently warrants an emphasis of funding to be placed on individual students instead through the emphasis on 'reasonable', it becomes an evidential marker.

The argument made that the benefits of higher education in the terms of average higher earnings from graduates therefore justifies the tuition fee system and is consequently progressive as you are taxing higher earners in one that is fundamentally flawed. The system is determined through the assumption that earnings will be higher, which implies an overemphasis from the Browne and Dearing reviews on the financial element as the primary benefit in the eyes of the students and the wider political sphere. To rest the repayment system on the basis of an anticipated average increase in earnings rests on an expectation of an implicit understanding of universities as institutions functioning as a pathway to increased earnings.

From a financial perspective in technical terms of the current post-Browne tuition fee repayment system, the points of Browne and Dearing were that repayment was tied to an expected average increase in earnings, however the policy structures that have been designed see the lower tiers of repayment begin at the £21,000 earnings mark, yet the national average salary is £27,000 per year (Stone. 2017). As a technical critique rather than a discursive one, the system of tuition fees cannot be assumed to be progressive due to the fact that the repayment structure as is currently designed will see funding from graduates who are earning underneath the national average wage, which is at odds, with the fundamental argument and implication made by proponents of the tuition fee system that it is reflective of average increases in wages and individual benefit. There is little indication that the system offers value for money from the conceptualisation of the system having varying tuition fee costs reflective of quality, as the range of universities have in fact tightened the gap of tuition fee costs between HEIs towards the highest available bracket.

- Higher Education Itself

The discursive conceptualisation of higher education has fundamentally altered from the days of the Robbins report, a distinct departure from the eclecticism of Robbins aims, towards a more explicit focus upon economic benefits both to the individual and wider society. The civic benefits of higher education have been diminished in comparison to broader economic benefits, representing a shift away from the 'public' towards the 'private' (Marginson, 2013), HEIs will see many different conceptualisations, all within this spectrum identified by Marginson, but all with distinct philosophies and designs.

- Robbins Report

The introductory section of the Robbins Report establishes that the reports purpose is to determine the principles upon which the long term development of post-secondary education, specifically higher education, should function, a framework of which policy should be designed to direct higher education, a series of overarching institutional goals of which the sector should adhere to. The section begins at the premise of questioning whether new institutions are required for the long term development and direction of higher education, in addition the Treasury minute cited as the underlying official establishment of the Report states a requirement to investigate the contemporary means of planning and co-ordinating the development of the sector and whether this requires updating and to what extent. The Treasury minute cited (P.1) is as follows:

“to review the pattern of full-time higher education in Great Britain and in the light of national needs and resources to advise Her Majesty's Government on what principles its long-term development should be based. In particular, to advise, in the light of these principles, whether there should be any changes in that pattern, whether any new types of institution are desirable and whether any modifications should be made in the present arrangements for planning and co-ordinating the development of the various types of institution”.

The first sentence establishes that whilst the report should recommend what principles higher education should be directed under in the long term, that these recommendations are largely constructed to determine funding models that ensure a benefit to the nation and provide educated graduates but also acknowledge national resources and therefore consequently offer value for money. The Treasury places a distinct open mindedness indicating the lack of hitherto Government reports into higher education itself that are on a far reaching scale comparable to the Beveridge Report or others.

The broader aims section of the Robbins Report states that specific aims must be balanced, ‘no simple formula, no answer in terms of any single end, will suffice’ (Robbins, 1963) weighting too much towards one aim can negatively impact the others. The underlying theme of this excerpt is that the direction higher education should pursue is one that there is no overall consensus on, that a myriad of sources have provided multiple responses, and so the purpose of the Report itself is to balance and equally weight these responses in a way that provides the best benefit to higher education.

There is a matter of fact openness that one aim is not enough and would be a detriment to other underlying principles of higher education, hence that the key to a successful higher education sector is one balanced around multiple goals, the key sentence here indicating this is ‘Eclecticism in this sphere is not something to be despised: it is imposed by the circumstances of the case. ‘, the latter half being the key snippet, an admission by the part of the authors that higher education has a notable complexity that must be met with a complex answer. The emphasis placed on ‘imposed’ after describing the eclecticism the report concludes isn’t within an explicitly negative context, implying a pragmatism of the report towards a higher education sector that required direction in multiple ways. The focus on eclecticism of aims is a continual underlying theme that guides the recommendations of the report, a distinct focus upon the multiple directions of higher education as being equally important in order to secure the long term stability of the sector and so that an unequal focus on one aim would not come at the cost of the other aims. These aims being: instruction in skills; the promotion of the general powers of the mind so as to produce not mere specialists but rather cultivated men and women; to maintain research in balance with teaching, since teaching should not be separated from the advancement of learning and the search for truth; and to transmit a common culture and common standards of citizenship.

Whilst numerically citizenship is mentioned only twice in Robbins, the contextual nature of it as a core directional aim of Higher Education highlights the importance placed on the term, a common universalised culture and community that students and graduates feel connected to. The term 'citizen' is used by Robbins eight times (P. 8, 45, 71, 164, 205) and citizenship twice (P. 7, 169), used within contexts of emphasising the benefits of educated citizens, phrases such as 'we do not believe that modern societies can achieve their aims of economic growth and higher cultural standards without making the most of the talents of their citizens' and 'The good society desires equality of opportunity for its citizens to become not merely good producers but also good men and women.', provides an emphasis on the civic quality of higher education and access to it, placing value on the 'higher cultural standards' is a significant representation of societal value placed on higher education.

- Dearing Report

The Dearing Report makes use of 'citizenship' twice, the first being within the opening section, listed with 16 other points of context that the Report was recommended to take account of when researching and taking evidence, stating that 'higher education continues to have a role in the nation's social, moral and spiritual life; in transmitting citizenship and culture in all its variety; and in enabling personal development for the benefit of individuals and society as a whole' (P.4), the second being a reference to the four aims and recommendations of the Robbins Report explaining that the Report questioned what should be the broad overall for higher education for the following twenty years from publication, using the aims of Robbins as an example of how the aims should be conceived (P.71). The question of citizenship is raised as a potential aspect and consideration to be acknowledged in the research of the report, yet no further mention of citizenship is made in the Report, the difference being with Robbins is that citizenship is involved in the core overall aim and direction for higher education policy following on from the Report, whereas the Dearing Report holds it as a concept for consideration of their findings with little to no mention of it further on. A discussion of citizens is however made later on in the document on the question of who should fund Higher Education (P.288) within the discussion on why the state should have continued involvement in funding higher Education stating that 'Society as a whole has a direct interest in ensuring that the United Kingdom has the level of participation in higher education which it needs for sustained economic and social viability and, therefore, to match those of its competitors... Whilst the measurable financial benefits from higher education qualifications accrue largely to individuals, the costs of a shortfall in the numbers of those obtaining such qualifications will fall to the UK as a whole and its citizens.' This discussion of citizens is contextualised as an economic interest and the perceived cost of higher education is to discursively reorient the conceptualisation of citizenry as a more economically oriented entity concerned with cost, departing from the conceptualisation of citizenry by Robbins as one of shared societal and cultural value with multiple social links and bonds between citizens, higher education and students due to mutual benefit. The Dearing Report, instead of citizens and citizenship as a whole, instead makes 60 references to 'community', however the usage of community involves multiple diverging meanings, some referencing a wider societal or regional community, some addressing the academic community as a whole, there is no clear definition made for what the Dearing Report represents a community as, suffering from what Levitas (p. 188, 2000) claims at the time was a discursive ambiguity and attempt by political figures, most notably the New Labour government, to police the divisive aspects of the market and legitimise the extraction of unpaid labour. The conceptualisation of community at the time was a collective abstraction, a 'promiscuous flexibility' that allowed an idealistic discursive bridging of the limitations

of free market capitalism to meet the wellbeing of a nation, which is how 'community' as a concept is presenting in Dearing, multiple meanings matching the 'promiscuous flexibility' described by Levitas (p. 191, 2000). In this context the description of community in Dearing is divergent from its conceptualisation in Robbins, Dearing using 'community' multiple times with no clear meaning, whereas the civic aspects of community and citizenship are used few times in Robbins, but with distinct meaning and tied into one of the central aims of the Robbins principle.

- Browne Review

The Browne Review makes no mention of 'citizenship' whatsoever, there is a singular reference to 'citizens' within the subsection 'We need a long term funding solution for higher education in England that allows us to sustain and improve our international position.' (Page 17) The reference to 'citizens' in this section is within the context of international competition, that competitors will continue to capitalise on 'benefits of higher education for their economies and citizens and raise the bar on participation and investment', Browne then follows on to explain the requirement for sustained long term funding within this context whilst stating that higher education faces 'faces significant reductions in public investment'. The rhetorical and discursive emphasis is a loose reference and mentioning of citizens, the context of the section is on the pressures placed from international competitors that as they improve benefit their citizens and economies, the implicit discursive follow on is therefore that more sustainable funding consequently secures economic benefit for the nation and citizens. The connection of citizenship provided by higher education recommended by Robbins, connecting students to wider society has been dropped, with the only mention of citizens in Browne being about sustained funding benefitting citizens within an association to economic benefit. A discursive and rhetorical shift diminishing the conceptualisation of higher education as fostering bonds between students to wider society and communities.

The section explaining the broad aims of the report, the direction that it took and mindset the authors had when writing and assessing the information they received, is a distinct and clear openness in the attempt to balance multiple competing aims of the sector, the aforementioned eclecticism that the report takes as a crucial underlying foundation to the broad aims of higher education. The section on existing institutions recommends that the core principles for development should be to ensure that higher education provides places to meet the demand placed by the massive population growth from post-war generations, expansion up until the 1980s at least. Another being that there must be varied education of high quality and diversity, to meet national needs and for students to take their place in an 'increasingly complex social and economic structure'. The final recommendation being that the sector and individual universities should grow at an organic rate, one where they are not forced to grow for the sake of growth.

- Discursive comparisons

In the section 'Education as an investment', Robbins establishes the concept of higher education as an investment by wider society towards wider civic and economic stability, emphasising that the goal should not explicitly be productivity itself but should be the 'good life that productivity makes possible', a distinction to highlight that economic benefit in and of itself is not the broad goal of higher education but to help ensure the general wellbeing and good of the individual and community, in both an economic, social and civic sense. The emphases from Robbins in its outlining of broader eclecticism of aims was to establish the importance of the civic and social benefits of higher education at an equal level to the economic benefits of higher education, a balancing of aims. An excerpt from this section outlines this clearly:

‘All that we are contending here is that a solution of the problem of allocating resources should not be sought on the basis of narrow notions of the nature of the economic return and of measurements which, if they are comparatively easy to make, omit elements of fundamental value.’

The phrase ‘omits elements of fundamental value’ when used in comparison to economic benefits, is to emphasise that non- economic concepts, the social and civic elements central to the underlying 4 aims of Robbins, hold fundamental value in the eyes of the Report, and the focus of which should be held in the eclectic equilibrium of aims as a fundamental and crucial aim of higher education. This phrase will become crucial further in this analytical section, as the distancing from the eclecticism of Robbins, and the increased focus on economic benefits, is one of the core discursive elements in altering the dynamic of the student relationship to higher education and changing the conceptual imagery of both subjects. Eclectic equilibrium balancing civic, social and economic benefits, is the core of Robbins, all aspects of the primary aims must be weighted equally in the future of governing policy, and the discursive emphases to be found in Dearing and Browne, break from the principle of eclectic equilibrium in favour of a more economically oriented outlook compared to the civic and social aspects, a change that fundamentally alters the nature of the relationship between students and higher education, and the political spheres perceived conceptual outlook of the individual student and higher education as a sector.

Section 4.2 of the Chapter Wider Context (P.51) of the Dearing Report continues the underlying thread and theme of the Dearing Report thus far that characterises the needs of a modern global economy, the learning society, as being inextricably connected to higher education, providing a well-educated workforce trained with the skills demanded from the global economic system and securing the economic stability of the UK within this socio-economic context. The Report acknowledges that the ‘distinctive nature’ of higher education lies in the ‘pursuit of knowledge and understanding’, but follows this with an admission that higher education has ‘become central to the economic wellbeing of nations and individuals. The qualities of mind that it develops will be the qualities that society increasingly needs to function effectively.’, this is a discursive restructuring of institutional priorities applied and perceived from the political sphere, whilst also reaffirming the primacy of economic oriented outputs for higher education. This has become a continual thread of emphasis from the Dearing Report on the economic benefits from higher education, this becomes a process of discursive reorientation for institutional priorities and therefore is a consequential process of fundamentally shifting the relationship of students towards higher education, as the sector increasingly becomes oriented around economic benefit, the crucial importance of such to the individual and wider society.

Section 5 on the Aims and Purposes takes the 4 core aims of the Robbins Report and looks to adapt or change them accordingly to meet the requirements of current educational policy requirements, these were updated by the Dearing Report to these:

- to inspire and enable individuals to develop their capabilities to the highest potential levels throughout life, so that they grow intellectually, are well-equipped for work, can contribute effectively to society and achieve personal fulfilment;
- to increase knowledge and understanding for their own sake and to foster their application to the benefit of the economy and society;

- to serve the needs of an adaptable, sustainable, knowledge-based economy at local, regional and national levels;
- to play a major role in shaping a democratic, civilised, inclusive society.

Immediately these updates to the broad general purposes of higher education has reoriented points to more distinctly realise the benefits to the wider economy, and to further shape higher education to meet the needs of the learning society. To do so is to alter the relationship of students and higher education to one that produces economic outputs than in the past, whilst this change is not wholly about economic benefits, and the civic tenets of the Robbins aims remain, the dynamic has been altered to lean more heavily into economic benefits. Therefore whilst the labelling of these aims and purposes may not explicitly state a weighing of economic oriented aims over other aspects, the expansion of the aims to more widely tie themselves to economic needs is an implicit discursive process of further prioritising economic aims, and therefore shifting the relationship between students and higher education to a more economically oriented focus. The explanation from the Dearing report for the increased focus and scope of economic aspects, is due to the reports research indicating that multiple countries worldwide increasingly perceive higher education as an 'essential component of a knowledge based economy', the report follows this stating that education, especially higher education must see an increased focus of investment in order to ensure that the UK has a high quality workforce that will draw in and secure 'increasing investment... by industry and commerce'. Again the report presents the economic circumstances which justify the changes in higher education as immutable and fixed, a global trend which must be adapted to, especially to maintain a high global competitiveness in order to ensure economic prosperity.

Immediately as a point of change from the Robbins review and the Dearing Review is the addition of the concept of knowledge based economy, a political concept gaining popularity within New Labour in the early 90s and entering political language and commonality, the value of 'general powers of the mind' and the focus on a commonality of citizenship (Robbins, 1963) were core aims established by the Robbins report and so there exists a loose connection between that and the concept of a knowledge based economy. The attention drawn to the numbers of high performing HEIs globally is to draw a clear link between a knowledge based economy and said HEIs, implying a beneficial relationship and thus strengthening of the Higher Education sector is a fundamental requirement to sustain this high performance.

As a discursive and rhetorical device, the learning society is repeated again and again to normalise and solidify its importance from the perspective of the author, the Dearing Report itself was titled 'Higher Education in the learning society' highlighting the crucial rhetorical importance of the term to the report, learning society is then mentioned 20 more times within the document and the title of the first chapter 'A vision for 20 years: the learning society' (P.7. 9. 10. 18. 59. 66. 72. 82. 130. 259. 296. 304). The emphasis placed on learning societies by its repeated reference in titles and subsection titles is to place a distinct importance by the author on the concept. The learning society creates a foundational point to legitimise further discussion on the various interests such as industry and wider global corporations that must be catered to in order to ensure the continued economic success of the UK, repetition in this manner, alongside the placing of this relationship between higher education and industry as self-evidently beneficial is a specific rhetorical device to present this relationship as both a core requirement to the future of higher education and one that is fundamentally infallible. This repeating of the concept of the learning society, its continued repetition throughout the report reinforces itself conceptually by making it appear to the reader as a

social reality that must be adhered to, and the effectiveness of this discursive and rhetorical device is highlighted in Browne as this conceptualisation of higher education is further expanded upon as accepted fact and consensus.

The Browne Review continues and further cements this process of redefining the political conceptualisation of higher education. Commissioned with the scope of considering the balances of contributions whilst balanced by the goal of increased and widening participation, the Browne Review's discursive conceptualisation of higher education fundamentally redefined it as a sector when compared to the Robbins Review, with the emphases shifting to rhetorical restructuring of the priorities of higher education through questioning, the structural dynamic of the report itself and discursively reorienting who its primary beneficiaries were.

The first paragraph of the foreword establishes the attitudes of the authors towards higher education as a whole, two consecutive sentences stands out:

'Graduates go on to higher paid jobs and add to the nation's strength in the global knowledge based economy. For a nation of our scale, we possess a disproportionate number of the best performing HEIs in the world, including three of the top ten.'

This statement seeks to establish the societal functions and values of higher education for graduates within the United Kingdom at the time of writing, the former being the economic value of graduates both to the individual and nation-state simultaneously, the latter detailing the UK's unique global performance with a high standard of HEIs. The identification of economic benefits deriving from higher education and placing that is the focal point of successes and benefits of higher education is the admittance of viewing higher education as a means of economic enhancement to the individual and to the state. This is not a new concept compared to the previous reports, the Robbins Review states that the general approach of those entering higher education is for the purposes of entering higher paid jobs warranting an education of higher education, the reality of higher education for the individual, the primary motivating factor is stated within each of these reports on average to be the benefit of higher paid jobs upon graduation. The societal connections and civic elements identified and lauded by the Robbins Report (1963), such as the perception of higher education as a 'capital investment' and the 'exceptional opportunities' provided by the wider community to the student have altered. The relationship of civic community described in the foreword presents an implicit link to the national community through the economic productivity and contributions made by graduates specifically, the tying of student to higher education, and the graduate to the wider national community through economic productivity.

The report explains the general perceived benefits of higher education as well, such as the enlivening of culture, stimulation of regional economies and enriching of civic society, these are all linked together in a singular paragraph whereas the individual and national economic benefits both receive paragraphs respectively, there is a distinct structural style to the report in the volume of explanation lent to economic benefits over generalised civic and cultural benefits. This is a departure from the Robbins Report (1963) in which the creation of well-rounded citizens was placed as an equal priority, Robbins emphasised an eclecticism in which multiple benefits and directions should be tempered and focussed upon equally, with no singular direction taking precedence, the Browne Report (2010) here has placed an emphasis on economic benefit, at the individual and national level, through the emphases placed through repetition or lack thereof of civic elements when compared to economic benefits.

The words 'citizenship' and 'civic' are not mentioned at all in the Browne Report, whereas

'citizenship' was at the core of one of the four aims recommended in the Robbins Report. The Browne Report begins the first Chapter 'The Investment Case for Higher Education' (P.14) with the summary statement that 'England has an internationally respected system of higher education that produces major benefits for individuals and the country. Sustaining future economic growth and social mobility in an increasingly competitive global knowledge economy will require increased investment in higher education. Other countries are already broadening and strengthening their higher education systems and we need to rise to this challenge.', the summary statement here, especially within the context of a chapter providing the case for investing in higher education, is to place the primary perceived benefits by the author of higher education in the spotlight. The 'major benefits' in the summary are followed by description of purely economic benefits that are placed under pressure by international economic competitors, this consequentially warrants the importance of investment to higher education and the UK economy. Competition and pressures are placed as the rhetorical levers to press further investment into higher education, the usage of the phrase 'sustaining future economic growth and social mobility' is to imply that as a consequence of not pursuing further investment in higher education, that economic growth and social mobility will no longer be able to be sustained, the emphasis on 'sustaining' is crucial by the author to convey the importance of their recommendations and the pressures currently faced.

'Economy' is mentioned several times within the first chapter, on the case for investment for higher education, in Browne. Phrases such as 'Higher education is a major part of the economy' (p.15), international students are estimated to 'generate £3.3bn of output across the economy and over 27,800 jobs' (P.15). The latter uses of the 'economy' are within the subsection 'Future economic growth and social mobility are at risk unless we continue to invest in higher education', arguing that a lack of investment in higher education will see a consequential failure to 'increase skill levels' that will culminate in the UK economy in having a 'low skill equilibrium' with low paid jobs and limited investment. The emphasis of this whole section within the Browne review, is to emphasise the importance of the higher education to the economy, and to implicitly link the two together as mutually beneficial, the wider international economic pressures become the primary reason and justification for seeking investment to higher education. The civic elements and justifications for investment lauded by Robbins have been left behind, economic aspects and relations between higher education, society and students have overshadowed all other qualities and benefits in scope by the time of the Browne Review.

Higher education is provided as a potential means for securing and reproducing the UK economy's worldwide competitive edge in a global economy that is increasingly dependent upon 'high level skills', the Report cites a Global Competitiveness Report (Schwab and Porter, 2008-09) that states that the UK rests at a 'competitive disadvantage' due to an 'inadequately educated workforce', consequently the Browne Report states these challenges are to be solved through increased investment and a push for greater quality within higher education. This is an evidentiality marker, to rhetorically cement the requirement for 'high level skills' produced through higher education as a fundamental requirement for continued economic stability and success, it is to make this concept an uncontested fact, by valuing the necessity of a successful economy as paramount, consequentially shifts the conceptual realisation of higher education. The focus upon maintaining this economic advantage crucial to a successful economy through an educated workforce continues through this section, the focus of the Robbins Report upon eclecticism of parallel and equal aims has been altered with the change in direction of priority towards an economic focus. There is a circumstantial change in the directions of economies between Robbins and Browne, the focus of Browne upon a

knowledge based economy, especially given the Reports identification of economic dependence upon 'high level skills' warrants a more comprehensive focus upon an economically oriented set of benefits derived from higher education and those benefits should be the manner of which higher education should as a sector focus itself upon improving. That is the overall basis of which the Browne Report believes warrants a focus upon increase of quality through the basis of the tuition fee system.

- Higher education conclusion

The crucial discursive shift on higher education within these 3 sources is the departure from the Robbins Principle of eclecticism, whereby the four broad aims set forward by Robbins to direct future policy for higher education emphasised the requirement for those four aims to be pursued equally, with no single aim focussed upon at the behest of the others, this is because the Robbins Report argued that in so doing would be to fundamentally harm higher education by leaving the other aims behind. The eclecticism that was at the heart of Robbins has been dropped by the Dearing Report and especially the Browne Report, the dynamic has shifted in favour of the individual aims, specifically economic ones, fundamentally altering the dynamic and discursive conceptualisation of higher education and therefore representing a paradigm shift in higher education. The previous perception of Higher Education in Robbins was presented by the discursive themes in Browne and Dearing as incompatible with 21st century socio-economic consensus, and so consequently the only way to improve higher education was to fundamentally alter, the dynamic of higher education. The discursive conceptualisation has shifted towards a format more weighted towards economic emphasis, reflecting wider political trends of the times, in the manner of which it becomes structured, the interests that it is constructed to most, and how the benefits of higher education are increasingly discursively weighted to emphasise the economic over other benefits.

- Funding

Funding becomes a crucial underpinning thread throughout all three of these sources, a core fundamental question of how to expand and sustain higher education, the conclusions differ as time goes on, yet funding is the crucial overhanging question that has loomed over higher education. The dynamic of sources of funding, and the burden of which funding is placed, reflects the wider contemporary political consensus at the time of writing, with the burden shifting further towards the individual. The shift of funding in burden reflects wider discursive trends within the sources that show a shift in perceptions of priorities and primary beneficiaries of higher education.

- Robbins Report

The Robbins Report begins from the premise that the state and taxpayer would fund higher education due to its benefit as a mutually beneficial social good, drawing ideological and theoretical parallels from the Beveridge Report (1942), and that the primary issue for higher education and the questions of funding was not the sources of funding, but rather that it should be organised in a manner seen as having value for money. Robbins explains:
'The absence of a plan for everything is not necessarily an indication of chaos. But higher education is so obviously and rightly of great public concern, and so large a proportion of its finance is provided in one way or another from the public purse, that it is difficult to defend the continued absence of co-ordinating principles and of a general conception of objectives.' (P.5)

Robbins uses phrasing suggesting self-evidentiality of public funding being the primary means for higher education, the focus of the above sentence is the lack of broader organising principles and directions, it places funding through the public purse as already accepted and uncontested, self-evident, an already established position and consensus.

- Dearing Report

Dearing (1997) then begins by explaining the trends over the past decades, of the principle of Robbins encouraging increased participation to those who can succeed in higher education, however the practical policy caveat arose of a lack of funding increases in conjunction to meet the requirements of increased demand, the principle of increased supply of higher education was accepted but the issues of funding said higher education places became difficult to ascertain, prompting the funding crises of the 1980's and 90's and consequently prompting the Dearing Report. Dearing emphasised that policy based on 'more of the same' would be detrimental and unable to meet the requirements of an increasingly expensive and expanding higher education sector. The introduction establishes that its inception and primary purpose is to 'advise on the long term development of higher education'. The following sentence places the issue of funding as the core question to be answered on the issue of long term development of higher education, planned cuts to funding are discussed as a risk to the 'quality and effectiveness of higher education'. Such a keen focus on the question of funding, immediately established in the introductory section, sets the tone and direction of the report itself, funding becomes a fundamental driving force, a core that runs throughout all aspects of the report. Funding is the crucial thread at the core of the Dearing Report, the word 'funding' is used more than a thousand times in the Dearing Report, it's the core component question to solve.

We recognise the need for new sources of finance for higher education to respond to these problems and to provide for growth. We therefore recommend that students enter into an obligation to make contributions to the cost of their higher education once they are in work. Inescapably these contributions lie in the future. But there are pressing needs which we identify in the Report in the years 1998/99 and 1999/2000. We urge the Government to respond to these in its decisions on funding, by giving credit for the full value embedded in the commitments given by students to provide for their education.

The section immediately after, moves on to the perceived necessity for new sources of finance, this has a wider context as the years leading to the Dearing Report saw the higher education sector suffer from multiple funding crises, with the report itself predicting pressing funding needs in the immediate years following the reports publication. Dearing like Robbins describes the costs provided to the 'public purse', the context of Robbins as seen above was that the cost to public purse warrants overarching objectives and structures to ensure standards, Dearing diverges from this point by saying that within the context of funding reform that the report recognises the 'government's duty to weigh the many deserving calls on the public purse and, within that context, determine within Parliament what public resources should be made available to higher education.'(P.8). Rather than the weighing of the public purse costs as justification for increased standards from higher education as described in Robbins, Dearing's use of the phrase emphasises limitations to available funding due to the 'many deserving calls,' not wishing to diminish the various needs of other departments and spending commitments. Robbins emphasis on 'great public concern'(P.5) places higher education as of great public importance and therefore warranting the maintaining of the contextual contemporary spending levels at the time due to its importance, with Dearing this dynamic alters in that higher education is no longer its own uniquely important section of public spending and value, instead existing within a multitude of 'deserving' spending commitments, and

that consequently funding should be assigned within the context of multiple pressing needs.

The concluding point of the section establishing the Reports research into higher education as it functioned at the time, and the circumstances and history of the sector leading to the report that government commitment to expansion of student numbers without a pre-emptively prepared plan to ensure that funding rose in parallel to student numbers and ensured adequate funding to maintain standards, the report stresses that long term funding requirements such as maintenance and 'inadequate infrastructure for research'. This concluding point acted as the prompt for suggesting alternate forms of funding, the pressures on funding of the 1980s and early 1990s are argued to have warranted a paradigm shift within the sector on sources of funding and where the burden of funding should be placed, which leads into the subsequent section of the report, an analysis of wider societal context since Robbins that has provided the framework of which the Dearing Reports suggestions originate from.

- Browne Review

The focus of the Browne Review was for the purposes of ensuring the financial sustainability of the sector as well as the world class standards, continuing on from a similar premise to the Dearing Report. There were additional aims of improving quality and participation, however the chief purpose was ensuring long term financial sustainability highlighted by 'Our system needs a sustainable funding solution for the future' (P.17) within the context that '2006 changes were designed to bring in more private contributions to higher education and hence make the system more sustainable' (P.21) then with the follow on caveat that there has been 'no increase in the private contribution made by students and graduates.' (P.21), the emphasis is placed upon sustainable funding with a perceived deficit in the contribution being made privately by students. Following on from this the Review focussed discussion on the variants of private contribution to be pursued for financial sustainability. The main discussions of a graduate tax by Browne consider it within the context of cost to the individual student and lack of consumer oriented choice from a graduate tax compared to that which the tuition fee system would provide. Phrases such as 'high earning graduates pay more, possibly more than the cost of their own education' (P.24) are to weigh university courses solely as an individual cost, with no conceptualisation of a civic obligation to wider society from the university course as seen in Robbins with talk of 'exceptional opportunities' provided by the wider community for them (P.198). There is no further cost or obligation considered by Browne, it sees an easily quantifiable economic and transactional cost for education, the cost of the degree, with no social or civic bonds or elements, this continues the thread of conceptual discursive marketization of higher education seen in Browne. This is especially noticeable when considering that student numbers exist as the primary source of funding within Browne's recommendations, as proxy through the credit of tuition fee loans.

Emphasis is placed on no upfront cost to the student. The primary difference between the proposed tuition fee system and a future potential graduate tax

The summary of Chapter 1 states: '...Sustaining future economic growth and social mobility in an increasingly competitive global knowledge economy will require increased investment in higher education. Other countries are already broadening and strengthening their higher education

systems and we need to rise to this challenge. The premise that prompted the reports findings on funding was prompted by an ever increasingly competitive global higher education system, a challenge is issued by the ever increasing quality of higher education structures of other countries, and so to secure the success and quality of higher education for both students and the UK itself, then increased investment through the reports suggestions is a crucial aspect requiring focus. The emphasis is placed upon necessity, a globally competitive higher education system increasingly warrants greater investment for the purposes of reproducing and securing...'

The Report draws comparison between graduate taxes and the proposed tuition fee system, the primary advantage of the tuition fee system over a graduate tax is that the tuition fee system encourages students to compare universities due to the perceived cost and value for money, this will arguably drive up standards and quality as universities will have to compete for student places.

The summary of Chapter 2 states that:

'Over the last 50 years, the higher education system has become more diverse, grown to accommodate more students and the principle that private contributions should help to meet the costs of higher education has been established. The latest changes made in 2006 have raised increased income for institutions without harming demand from students but major challenges on participation, quality and sustainability still remain.'

This first sentence confirms the findings of the earlier section on the Dearing Report that further established the principle of private and individual contributions through the proxy of credit. This continues the underlying principles of Robbins and Dearing that higher education should be available to all with the capability and skill to do so, that follows the increase in proportion of the UK population who go to university. The discursive evolutions to alter the conceptualisation of the student into a consumer is highlighted by the emphasis made by the summary here on 'demand', market oriented language used to describe consumers and their demand for a product. Consistent with earlier analysed discourse from Dearing around students as 'discriminating investors', these discursive evolutions are to increasingly apply a market oriented conceptualisation around students.

Browne establishes a brief history of higher education funding in the last previous 50 years, summarising the premise and conclusions of both Robbins and Dearing Reports, drawing attention that the Robbins Report's focus on increased participation did not see a consequential upkeep in public funding during the 1980s (Barr & Crawford 1998), which prompted the focus of the Dearing Report into determining the primary issue of funding. Browne summarises the Dearing Report suggestion as students paying a deferred contribution towards the cost of tuition fees, based from income contingent loans paid after graduates begin work, government policy split from Dearing's recommendation of a deferred contribution, instead charging the fee upfront. The intention of the upfront cost was for the purposes of securing funding without 'putting more pressures on financial resources'. Browne states that 'Since this review was commissioned the pressure on public spending has increased significantly. This will add urgency to make funding sustainable' (P.3). The phrase 'pressure on public finances/resources' is used six times within the review, similar to the use of 'learning society' in the Dearing Review, the process of repetition is a discursive and rhetorical tool by the author to emphasise the reality of 'pressures' as well as serve as additional consequential justification for the recommendations of the report. The commissioning of the Browne Review to solve the issues of funding warrants discursive emphasis on the necessity of funding as central to the report. This emphasis on funding pressures, coupled with earlier analysis in this section on the discursive emphasis and repetition over the lack of private contributions with the 2006 funding changes, is to place an explicit rhetorical favouring to private individual funding over the others. The

tie of private individual funding deficit alongside historic funding challenges is to create a discursive thread tethering the two of these points together, making an increase in private contributions seem the 'natural' and 'reasonable' solution.

The goal of the report itself was to seek a balance between funding pressures and student demand and access to higher education, the priority of cost efficiency through creating an upfront cost through a loan fundamentally alters the dynamic of student towards state and higher education, whilst in practice the policy design of the fee system based on thresholds of earnings functions similarly to a graduate tax, the dynamic of access to higher education being based from a tuition fee loan is to alter the student relationship to more closely resemble a creditor-debtor relationship. Presenting the argument as a thread that goes from funding pressures, progressing to a perceived lack of private contributions, finalised by the representation of a graduate tax as overly costly in a purely economically reductionist perception of university course costs is a discursive process and evolving argument within the Browne Review that culminates in the conclusion and that the tuition fee system is the only viable option. The summary of the section stating that 'the principle that private contributions should help to meet the costs of higher education has been established' (P.18) is to further normalise and reproduce this process of normalising individual and private costs and burdens towards meeting the costs of higher education, it states as fact that this concept is now a fixed political consensus. Higher education in principle is no longer tied to the state or society as a whole, the detachment of this manner and burden placed upon private contributions is to theoretically individualise the benefits of higher education, to therefore reduce its perceived scope to more individual benefits, which is seen in comparisons earlier in this thesis that recognise the reduction in scope and priority to the Robbins decree to 'transmit a common culture and common standards of citizenship', this consequently reduces the scope of wider society and the state in its relation to higher education.

Issues of funding notwithstanding, the discursive process here of cementing private contribution as political consensus is fundamentally alter the relationship of higher education and student to one that is far more individualistic, and to minimise the relationship of the state and wider society to both students and higher education.

The principle of upfront costs, whilst the actual payment system functions akin to a graduate tax, is in principle designed as an act of transaction, of a consumer assessing the benefits of different universities, their costs, and the quality of the degrees they offer, the report focusses upon the primary difference of the current system and a graduate tax as representing a distinct increase in quality of teaching with the current tuition fee system due to students more carefully weighing their options and the quality of the courses offered. The university course therefore resembles a marketable product, the sector becomes a marketplace of competing courses and universities offering the most marketable aspects viable in order to secure the students purchase of a course, this is implied through the conceptualisation of students as investors and of university courses being represented as competing with one another for students. The presenting of this information as self-evidential is a discursive tool to solidify the process of conceptualised marketization as unquestionable, one that carries on from the Dearing Report laying the foundations of this conceptual shift. To create this marketised and credit oriented dynamic, the marketization of universities through their commodification is to fundamentally alter the social structure of universities and the relationship of the state and students towards it.

- Discursive comparisons

The primary point of change between the Robbins Report and its predecessors, government commissioned reports into higher education, is that the increased numbers and supply of places for higher education raised the issues of increased costs, providing funding issues that a state funded higher education sector was argued to be unable to afford. Consequently the burden of funding was shifted to an private contributors, to the individual student themselves, which contributed to a structural development that shifted the dynamic of higher education and its relationship towards students to a more market oriented style, which has further developed with the Browne report to further normalise market formats through the support of the tuition fee system due to the argument that it encourages an element of consumer choice with consequential university competition for students that the report believes will increase quality of experience and teaching. This is a standard belief of market oriented ideologies, that increased choice and competition will consequently ensure greater quality and value (Harvey, 2005). The elements of obligation arise as a primary theme within Browne in particular, the vision from Robbins of higher education as both an individual and societal boon has developed towards a student subject that is investor, consumer and debtor, shifting the process of an individual choosing the university they go to towards a more transactional element. Students are represented as savvy consumers and investors that choose a university based on cost efficiency, quality of teaching and experience, and the future individual economic benefits to be accrued due to this, with the implication that the student in this form will therefore force universities to force increase in quality of education out of necessity and competition over the available pool of students. The discursive representations from the government commissioned reports and inquiries that contribute to the broader underlying direction of higher education policy, have shaped the higher education sector to a much more market oriented structure in its wider conceptual relationships with wider society and students. The much more distinct shift in emphasis towards employer interests in Dearing and Browne reflecting the former, and the shift in emphasis of the direct economic benefits to individual students who participate in higher education, with universities presenting courses more distinctly as products to be invested in for the latter, clearly indicates the discursive shifts towards a neoliberal conceptualisation of higher education.

- Concluding analysis

The discursive and rhetorical devices utilised in the span of these 3 reports formed and altered higher education policy, as well as the conceptualised structures of the sector within the political sphere, the student subject has shifted in how it is perceived both in its relationship to higher education and to the rest of society, and finally the question of funding has had a notable discursive shift in where the burden of funding would be placed. These concepts within these 3 reports have shifted conceptually discursively and rhetorically, interlinked in how each of their dynamics have altered.

The discursive devices used have varied, some concepts have been left entirely or altered to fit within a market oriented framework, 'citizenship' has been one such example of this, discursive trends changing from the emphasis placed on citizenship in the Robbins Report in one of its central aims towards the Dearing and Browne Reviews, the former describing citizens as economic

beneficiaries with no other interest in higher education or the latter where citizenship as a concept has not been mentioned at all. The primary discursive tools within Dearing and Browne that have justified changes to the dynamic of funding being placed on the students, have largely revolved around implicit threads that tie limitations to funding and wider international competition with perceived pressures on long term economic benefit to the requirement for students to foot the bill. The rhetorical and discursive tool used to emphasise and draw attention to 'pressures' was through repetition with the phrase 'pressure on public resources/finances/spending' being made six times throughout the Browne Review. The emphasis being placed on 'pressure' is to emphasise a need for change and action, especially within the context of the following subsections which state that there has been 'no increase in the private contribution made by students and graduates.', a threaded implication by linking pressures to an implied lack of private contributions by students at the time, using this implicit thread is to then press a follow on discursive tool, the evidential marker, by stating that it is therefore 'reasonable' for students to face the burden of funding for higher education. This usage of evidential markers is to solidify and strengthen the justification for students to primarily meet the bill, putting forth this implied deficit of contribution in the context sustained pressures on funding, repeated through the document, then provides a natural argument and discursive thread to support the change of burden of funding to be placed on students.

The other discursive development has been the reconceptualization of the benefits of higher education to one that is solely economic, diminishing civic benefits of higher education lauded by Robbins, and then reorienting and emphasising the now prominent economic benefits of higher education to be held mostly by the individual students themselves. The Browne review diminishing and condensing the civic qualities of higher education into a singular paragraph whilst the economic benefits covered multiple paragraphs and the entire subsection. This is a distinct discursive shift from Robbins, which advocated for four eclectic aims that should share equal weighting so that one aim would not be pursued at the expense of another, with the civic aim being 'to transmit a common culture and common standards of citizenship', each of the aims were given equal prominence. For Browne to reduce civic benefits of higher education to a singular paragraph, dwarfed in quantity of discussion given and mention compared to economic benefits is to implicitly devalue civic elements at the expense of economic. This however was a natural discursive evolution from the Dearing Review, in which the 'learning society' was repeated upwards of twenty times within the review, with a conceptual emphasis being placed on its vision of students and graduates as economic actors consistently reskilling themselves to meet the needs of multinational economic actors and to react to wider international economic developments and needs, the pressures of the economy had to shape higher education to meet the need of the economy. The central core thread of Dearing being the 'pressures' of both funding and external economic trends prompting the envisioning of the 'learning society' as a response to that, the presentation of this concept was one that was undeniable reality through its repetition. The reduction of higher education to a primarily economic benefit then means that consequentially higher education must be fluid in its adaptability to wider external economic pressures, if its conceptualisation is as an economic beneficiary only to society and the individual, then the sector must alter to match and meet the needs of those wider external pressures. There has not been a singular transition from a public conceptualisation to a private one, wherein the market has become all-consuming and dominant within the sector, rather that discursive and rhetorical shifts have shown processes of marketization within higher education.

Formula funding of HEIs has adjusted in parallel to how the institutions have been reconceptualised and the consequential attitudes of the political sphere towards sector, shifting according to how the 'private' and 'public' conceptualisations (Marginson, 2011) have manifested and which of the ratio

has held most discursive dominance. The formula funding models as an algorithm determine how HEIs are funded and under what circumstances and requirements, such as institution size or number of students. During the 1990s the provision of higher education was 'entirely funded through direct teaching grants paid to universities by government' (Institute for Fiscal Studies, 2018), the format of tuition fees upon sequential implementation in 1998, 2006 and 2012 drew away incrementally from teaching grants to a funding balance wherein fees themselves were the majority source of funding. Research from UniversitiesUK (2016) highlights the balance of funding over the academic period of 2014-15 sourced 26% of funding directly from the government, whereas 44% came from fees.

This system was described by the IFS (2018) as designed to 'create a quasimarket structure in the HE system where universities are incentivised to compete to attract new students', regardless of the percentile specifics of changes to funding, the overall trend and shift has been to one wherein fees are the direct majority source of funding, with government grants and additional funding providing a supplementary source. This statement consequently confirms the discursive trends of both the Dearing and Browne reviews designing systems to reflect wider political trends to emphasise the necessity of contributions from students, viewed as the primary beneficiaries of higher education and therefore should be the primary source of funding for the sector. The 'quasimarket' structure of competing universities functioning as service providers competing for consumers.

These are the primary discursive and rhetorical tools that have been utilised in order to fundamentally alter the relationship between students to higher education, and the conceptualisation of higher education. The emphasis on 'pressures', diminishing of civic benefits of higher education whilst simultaneously emphasising the economic benefits of higher education as a requirement to meet the external 'pressures' creates discursive emphases and evidential markers that the shift of funding burdens towards students had to happen. The change was 'fair' and 'reasonable' as the discursively redefined parameters of benefits of higher education were then emphasised to be most beneficial to students. The benefits of higher education were redefined to be primarily economic, and then within that context students were seen to be the primary beneficiaries whilst omitting mention of civic benefits and wider societal interconnections, the relationship was reduced to be primarily economic, culminating in the burden of funding ultimately being passed over to students. The consequences of which shall now be analysed in the conclusion.

Conclusion

The political process of embedding the values held and forwarded by the Thatcher government as political consensus saw the consequential development of institutional normalisation of said ideologies, discursive tools utilised in these reports saw the evolution of these political consensus through the shifting the institutional formats whilst reflecting the wider political consensus as it increasingly asserted itself. It was dual process of reflecting wider political context and actively shifting the institutional foundations of higher education.

To answer the research questions and aims to identify what format the conceptualisation of higher education and students has changed to and to chart the evolution of their conceptualisation shall now be undertaken from the data analysed.

The conceptualisation of higher education's benefits has distinctly changed from one of an eclectic balance of aims, emphasising a broad balancing of personal benefit, wider societal benefits in viewing higher education as a capital investment and a way to enhance the civic qualities of the UK, to one that views higher education almost entirely through a lens of economic benefit, in which the civic aspects have been diminished. The emphasis has shifted towards the individual student and the economic 'necessity' of higher education to secure continued economic growth, wider societal and civic benefits have been discursively diminished.

The conceptualisation of higher education and the student subject, has changed into one that has been discursively reformatted into relationships, and conceptual presentations that have market oriented values ingrained into them. Emphasis on competition, choice of courses presented as products, the presentation of students as rational market actors, all concepts that became part of political consensus through the wider contextual political shift of the Thatcher governments onwards, in which market values became more widely ingrained into popular culture and political discourse and consensus. The student has altered in its dynamic and presentation by these sources as a consumer and investor, creating a marketised conceptualisation of higher education well removed from the social emphasis made by Robbins wherein higher education was a component part of a healthy nation. The embedding of the student in the concept of the learning society, repeated multiple times in the Dearing Report, was another process of discursive technique to further reiterate the links and ties between students to the wider economy, the concept itself reoriented the perception of society from a balance between civic and economy as forwarded by Robbins (1963) towards one that was far more economically reductionist, emphasising the ties between industry, higher education, students and graduates as the paramount relationship and cycle to higher education, it was to reconceptualise the student to a near completely economic actor. A discursive reconceptualization that occurred simultaneously with higher education itself. Repetition of the student as an investor, as a consumer of higher education which they view through the lens of competitive elements between universities, highlights a distinct process of marketising the conceptualisation of the student as a market actor. This reflects wider cultural and political evolutions during the time of the neoliberal revolution in which the individual became idealised as a rational market actor pursuing their best self-interests.

There is the additional evolution of where the 'investment' was to come from, an evolution that is interlinked with the question of funding. The Robbins Report presented higher education as a capital investment, specifically the grants to fund it 'students' grants are to be regarded as capital

investment', whereas the discursive and ideological shift reflected throughout the Dearing and Browne reports was to reconceptualise investment as one being made by the student as an individual as the student subject is presented as receiving the majority of benefits of higher education, learning society and wider economic benefits aside the shift in perception and discursive presentation of higher education as an institution with a diminished civic role compared to the presentation of Robbins, coupled with the emphasis placed on economic benefit to the student, is to create an ideological and theoretical foundation of which to shift the burden of funding onto the student. Through the process of reconceptualising 'investment' from that of a social, collective societal role to that of the individual student, reflecting the wider shifts in political consensus that emphasised the individual as its own rational actor that should be emphasised as the primary actor. These processes of reconceptualization are all interlinked, each individual concept changes in parallel to each other, culminating in an institutional reformatting and ideological reconstruction in which market values and values which emphasise the role of the individual, enterprise and economic benefit are emphasised and institutionally ingrained.

Higher education has shifting conceptually, this can be charted through the discursive and rhetorical styles used throughout these 3 reports, in that these styles highlight a shift in representation and explanation of higher education through different idealised forms and conceptualisations, most notably through the emphases placed on the benefits of higher education, where these benefits are most emphasised and who these benefits best represent and favour. Robbins begins by establishing the Robbins Principle of eclecticism with a balance between individual benefit, economic, civic and societal benefit from higher education, the balancing of these aims equally is reinforced through a rhetorical device of repetition of the concept within the Robbins Report, fundamentally the discursive aim of Robbins is to emphasise the need to balance equal aims. Dearing shifts in the dynamic it seeks to discursively and rhetorically construct for higher education to a conceptualised vision of higher education as a component part of a knowledge based economy and learning society, one that it is interlinked to the needs of industry and becomes a means to train an ever increasing and expansive list of skills needed for the 21st century as Dearing envisions it. The concept of the learning society is consistently repeated throughout the Dearing Report, whilst interlinked with the knowledge based economy, Dearing's repetition of these two concepts in parallel with each other is to discursively interlink them as a symbiotic and mutually beneficial concept, it is to link the established conceptualisation of the knowledge based economy with the envisioning of the learning society that Dearing seeks to construct for higher education, this is to rhetorically solidify and realise the learning society as a concrete socio-political concept and phenomenon. Browne further expands on this by taking the premise and foundation established by Dearing as an unquestioned socio-political phenomenon and consensus, and to emphasise wider competitive pressures from other nations that necessitates continuing the path established by Dearing. The premise of the learning society is central to how Dearing reconceptualises higher education, students and the premise of funding, it is to discursively redesignate the formatting and dynamics of higher education to fit within market oriented ideologies. Browne then follows on by presenting higher education and economic benefit as mutually beneficial and fundamentally interlinked by rhetoric repetition and arguing their benefits and requirements in parallel to each other within the Review, it is to continue the discursive process begun in Dearing and to further cement and reflect the process of ideological marketization of higher education in its conceptual form.

The discussion of funding has shifted in where the burden of funding is to be placed, and the reasoning and discursive justification of this change of funding sources. The burden of funding has

altered in its societal dynamic, it's a fundamental ideological shift in scope, the Robbins Report recommended that society as a whole through the taxpayer should contribute to the costs for higher education due to the perceived benefits of higher education attributed to through the report, especially the cultural, civic and socio-economic benefits, reflecting similar discursive policy trends adhering to the principle of state funding for wider collective social benefit such as the Beveridge Report. Since then the Dearing and Browne Reports have seen a discursive paradigm shift, a fundamental rejection of this concept, seen particularly through the rhetorical devices employed to naturalise the shift to individual burdens justification being due to greater costs as self-evident. The reports, Dearing especially as the Dearing Report solidified the concept of individualised burden at the time of writing, rationalised the increased costs of higher education as warranting a greater individual burden due to the burden being placed on the state and taxpayer as being unsustainable, this is reflective of wider political consensus of the time of the solidified and reified political consensus of neoliberal capitalism. A political consensus of a reduced state in scope and cost to the taxpayer, would consequentially see a post-war socially beneficial approach of higher public spending to higher education for wider social gains as incompatible with its perceived values. Dearing therefore positing the burden of higher education's shift in burden towards the individual student, being merely discursively and theoretically rooted in the political consensus of the time, is a process to shift higher education to structurally reflect the contemporary political consensus, through a reduced funding burden being placed upon the state and taxpayer and being shifted towards the individual. Browne further reinforces this by then using discursive and rhetorical devices to indicate that the suggestion of Dearing to place the burden of funding on the individual student as self-evidential and a concrete political consensus, despite protestations from NUS that the burden being placed upon students would be an unsustainable pressure (Vasagar J, & Shepard, J. 2010). The Browne Review held no questioning of the principle of individual burden as the primary funding source for higher education, it was accepted, Browne took the theoretical conceptualised framework provided by the Dearing Report on funding and expanded upon, shifting the discussion to the benefits of Graduate Tax against the tuition fee system. This has highlighted the overall discursive shift towards higher education, reflecting wider contemporary political consensus, with the 3 reports showing that discourse around higher education has shifted through distinct stages, a civic post war state collective effort to a rhetorical justification of individual burden in Dearing, and finally with Browne entrenching and reifying the concept of individual burden of funding, with the discursive trends seeking to maximise funding whilst also introducing market elements of competition to university courses and for students.

The core discursive processes utilised in these sources have been repetition, the diminishing of the civic and social bonds of Robbins in favour of economised variations, and the paralleling of the four aims eclecticism as central to the thesis of Robbins, with similar conceptualisations as central to the direction of higher education like the 'Learning Society'. The core discursive trend across these three reports is that Robbins establishes a policy and theoretical framework for higher education to follow and expand upon, evolving and developing it to a framework that reconceptualises higher education and the student subject. The funding crises of further years alongside the wider socio-political and cultural shift of political consensus towards a relatively neoliberal format then prompts the Dearing Report to propose a new groundwork for higher education in its conceptualisation and relationship to wider society that conforms to new political consensus. Use of repetition, of constantly enshrining the concept of the learning society into the very heart of its suggestions for the future of higher education is to intrinsically entangle the two together, it is to conceptually tether and associate them as one and the same, and the descriptions of the learning society as the future envisioning of higher education is to then create a direction for higher education that fits within the framework of

the learning society. The discursive and rhetorical emphasis on the learning society in Dearing was the core means utilised to discursively and conceptually entangle and weave processes of marketization and individualisation into higher education. A distinct stylistic pivot from the civic social entanglements and links as emphasised in Robbins as crucial to the direction of higher education, towards the learning society with the minimalisation of civic elements. This then culminates in Browne reifying, reproducing and discursively solidifying this new framework as infallible, as new political consensus. The Browne Review marks the culmination of a conceptualised and ideological paradigm shift within higher education that has seen the perception of higher education seen as a near solely economic beneficiary to the individual, wider industry and the national economy, the relationship between student and higher education now represents an investor to a product to be sold as well as a debtor to a creditor simultaneously, the rhetorical emphasis on obligation from students as the primary beneficiary and therefore owing the industry funding due to economic benefit, reflects the discursive and conceptualised shift of higher education to one with the most emphasised benefit as economic. A fundamental paradigm shift has occurred in the relationship between student and higher education, highlighted through their conceptualisation in these sources as analysed, their format and dynamic has been altered into one that is subject to far more market influences in how it functions and is presented, and how the student is an investor and primary beneficiary, but the lens of higher education as a nearly purely economic benefit as evidenced in Dearing and Browne has consequently shifted the burden of higher education funding to the student too, culminating in a student subject that is both debtor and investor simultaneously. Higher education has fundamentally been reformatted in a paradigmatic shift that has reshaped the sector in one that is institutionally representative of market oriented models and concepts, the shaping of the student into an investor and consumer, of higher education as a product to be presented to students and marketised based off of competitive elements, intentionally culminating in competitive elements integrating into the sector to 'improve standards'. Therefore from this the primary aim of this thesis has been met in that it clearly understands how the conceptualisation of higher education and students has developed, evolved and changed.

- Final recommendations

The general policy arc noted in the introduction of this thesis that saw the adoption of political principles of privatisation, emphasis on the expansion and freeing of markets, and the placing of the individual as the core political subject is a process that in the case of higher education, took root through the subversion of the sector to market interests under the guise of the natural efficiency of markets, and the reconceptualization of the sector to act as justification through adapting it to a wider neoliberal contextual political consensus. However the reports ultimately reflect and reproduce contextual political trends and react to the issues of the time, the 'learning society' in the Dearing Report paralleling educational policy trends and visions at the time such as the increasingly flexibility of capital and corporations to move necessitating an educated workforce to attract investment, and the Robbins Review functioning as a natural descendent of the Beveridge Report and the wider attitudes of the time to welfare policy, building a higher education framework to ensure growth within a post-war economy.

They are reflective of wider issues, the Dearing review in response to concurrent funding crises, the Browne to then re-examine the burden of contributions in the funding of higher education. These are reactive changes, and the context of Robbins would certainly be difficult to recreate in terms of popular support, not to mention numerous contemporary issues that could cause problems for a Robbins style grant model. Discursively these documents have reshaped how the student subject and HEIs are conceptualised, though this is innately reflective of contemporary circumstances and

political trends, as these reviews were commissioned with the express goal of exploring, reacting to and solving structural issues within higher education. For a contemporary progressive outcome for higher education, there has to be a renewed discursive emphasis placed upon the civic, cultural and local benefits of higher education, moving away from the strict primacy fixed upon the individual. There are a multitude of available progressive options of funding of higher education to be advocated, it requires political will to argue against existing norms, conventions and assumed models of efficiency. To exclusive adhere to arguments within funding and the technical arguments within that is to allow students and HEIs to remain conceptualised within a discursively marketised format, a discursive counter-reconceptualization is necessary.

For future research into this topic this thesis recommends further investigation and detailed analysis of the conceptualisation of the 'learning society' as presented by the Dearing Report, with its wider contextual political parallels to concepts such as the 'knowledge based economy' and prevailing attitudes to education from the end of the 1980s, the learning society and Dearing Report marked the foundations and early evolutions of the paradigm shift of conceptualisation of higher education, one that fully entrenches itself in Browne, but the exact process of early reconceptualization and understanding it is key to fully realising as researchers how these processes occur and how. For policymakers the primary recommendation is to commit to an introspection of how they present higher education, and whether the current solely economically oriented conceptualisation of it, and the presentation of the student as consumer and investor, is one that is healthy for the long term development of the sector. Analysis of a similar nature to the upcoming Augar Review upon its publication would yield useful information into the future direction of discursive trends surrounding higher education.

The publication of the Department of Education's intended aims for the Augar Review (2018) stated that the four core aims were choice, value for money, access and skills provision. Considering that these four core aims descriptions involve the phrases 'looking at how students and graduates contribute to the cost of their studies' and 'identifying ways to help people make more effective choices between the different options available after 18, so they can make more informed decisions... information about the earning potential of different jobs and what different qualifications are needed to get them', the presentation of higher education and further education's core priorities as informed choice through the lens of contributions to cost of studies is still in keeping with the previous themes of Browne and Dearing of presenting higher education with elements of competition and consumer choice. The intended aims of Augar imply an evolution of Dearing and Browne rather than a significant paradigm shift or divergence from the current trend, keeping with the political consensus highlighted at the beginning of this thesis, a policy arc upholding and emphasising the values of privatisation, emphasis on the expansion and freeing of markets, and the placing of the individual as the core political subject. The reconceptualization of higher education and the student subject appears to be embedded within political institutions for the foreseeable future. Were there to be an attempt to shift the current system of funding higher education to an alternative model, such as a graduate tax or an attempt to recreate a Robbins style student grants system, it would require a concerted effort to alter this reconceptualization and discursively restructure perceptions of higher education and the student subject, the discursive and rhetorical tools utilised over the Dearing and Browne Reports have rooted and normalised neoliberal and marketised concepts within higher education.

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